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**PURITY AND POWER**

**A RHETORICAL STUDY OF THE  
IDEOLOGY OF PURITY AND DEFILEMENT  
IN THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL**

**BY**

**Armin Siedlecki**

**B.A. (Hons.), University of Saskatchewan, 1989**

**THESIS**

**Submitted to the Department of Religion and Culture  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Master of Arts degree  
Wilfrid Laurier University  
1991**

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## 0.0 Introduction

0.1 In his analysis of the Gospel of Mark, Fernando Belo notes that post-exilic Israel possessed a well developed system of purity, organised around three centres of social formation or three foci of consumption. He identifies these three foci as a) the table--food, b) the house--bodies/sex, and c) the sanctuary--ideology/religious sacrifice (Be' 1981:38). While Belo's statement refers specifically to the later second temple period, the roots of Israel's system of purity can be traced significantly further back. The books of Leviticus and Numbers and the book of Ezekiel, for example, display a great concern with the concepts of purity and defilement, as the distribution of the root  $\aleph\daleth\aleph$ , which denotes impurity, suggests (Neusner 1973:26).

Distribution of the root  $\aleph\daleth\aleph$  in the Hebrew Bible.

	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Leviticus and Numbers	182	64 %
Ezekiel	44	15 %
Other	<u>57</u>	20 %
	283	

0.11 The stylistic and semantic similarities between the book of Ezekiel and the P source of Leviticus/Numbers has long been noted by biblical scholars and several attempts have been made to justify their interdependence. Zimmerli writes:

The undoubted contacts, in language and subject matter, between Ezekiel and P can be sufficiently explained from the view that P drew from the great stream of priestly tradition, from which also the priest prophet Ezekiel (at an earlier point of time) had also been nourished.

(Zimmerli 1979:52)

Since the P tradition of Leviticus and Numbers is primarily post-exilic in its formation, the prophecies in the book of Ezekiel may be seen as one of the earliest Hebrew literary sources with a central emphasis on the idea of purity. There were, to be sure, earlier indications of concern with pollution, manifested by laws and taboos designed to avoid impurity. Most notable here is the Holiness Code of Lev. 17-26, whose date of composition is uncertain, but which scholars generally agree should be regarded as pre-exilic in origin. Yet, the bulk of Hebrew religious literature suggests that it was not until the exilic and post-exilic period that ideas of purity and defilement developed into focal points within Yahwistic worship. Belo's observation thus describes the product of four hundred years of a development, which I shall term "purity movement," on the basis of its ideological focal point.<sup>1</sup> The historical location of Ezekiel's rhetoric in regard to pollution and defilement could therefore be seen as a significant instance of theological definition and ideological formation centred around the concept of purity.

0.12 Ezekiel, and later the books of Leviticus and Numbers, may thus be regarded as representative of a theology in which pre-existing notions of purity developed into a normative ideology. This ideology came to determine the religio-ideological world view of post-exilic Israel, as noted by Belo in his analysis of Mark. Yet, the social context of the gospels is not the only indication of the impact of the "purity movement." The central core of the Torah is dominated by the concern to avoid pollution, as are significant portions of the Talmud. In short, the ideological

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<sup>1</sup> Movement here refers to a coherent ideology that constitutes a definable social force within a given society.

context of the origin of both Judaism and Christianity is dominated by a concern for purity.

0.13 In spite of this significance, the rhetoric of purity and defilement in the Hebrew canon has received little attention from biblical or literary scholars. Only a small number of studies have touched on the idea of pollution in Torah and Talmud. Furthermore, the book of Ezekiel, the style and content of which is undeniably characterised by concerns regarding contamination and purification, has been almost completely ignored by analyses of purity notions in early Israel. This neglect is especially surprising in light of the significant historical location of Ezekiel's rhetoric in regard to pollution and defilement. Any study of the ideological basis of the purity movement in early Judaism must hinge upon a thorough understanding of its evolution into a sociological force that became normative for Judean society. The following analysis shall therefore be concerned with the way in which Ezekiel, as a pioneer in the formation of the purity movement, employed the rhetoric of defilement to construct an ideological grid in which the concept of purity represented a central element.

0.2 The question of identity was crucial to the Judahite community in exile. Exiled Judeans had to compete with the Jerusalemite group that was not taken to Babylon for the status of Israel's true remnant. In this study, I shall argue that the idea of purity in the book of Ezekiel functioned to define the exilic community as precisely this remnant. With the exception of Ez. 40-48, Ezekiel's statements about purity do not take the form of legal precepts, as in the case of Leviticus/Numbers, but



rather than that of polemic and rhetoric. Ezekiel denounces the city of Jerusalem for having become defiled and impure through idol-worship and "abominable acts," which thereby provoked the deity to destroy the city and withdraw from its sanctuary. As far as Ezekiel, a representative of the exilic community, is concerned, the city of Jerusalem is now empty and desolate, purged of its inhabitants and its impurity. This is best illustrated by the prophet's vision of the future temple and the restored city, the description of which is so ideal that it is in fact altogether devoid of human beings. The land is, so to speak, a vacuum to be filled by the only true remnant of Israel, the *golah*, which had been removed from Jerusalem before the destruction of the city.

0.21 The concepts of purity and defilement in the book of Ezekiel thus constitute a hegemonic myth, by which the exilic community justified its superiority as the true remnant of Israel over the non-exilic Jerusalemite community. In other words, the rhetoric of pollution in the book of Ezekiel functions as a means of identity formation, defining the parameters of purity and defilement, as understood by the *golah*. At the same time this rhetoric excluded those not within these parameters from the distinctly demarcated boundaries of Israel's national and religious identity. The success of this rhetoric is demonstrated by the fact that the idea of purity became a central focus of the later Torah and that the experience of the Babylonian exile became as normative for later Judaism as the exodus from Egypt.

0.3 In this study I shall examine the rhetoric of purity as employed by the author(s) of the book of Ezekiel. The context for my analysis is set by a brief review

of the most prominent methodological approaches surrounding the subject of purity and taboo, beginning with the theories of William Robertson Smith and Sir James George Frazer, whose thought has pervaded much of 20th century anthropology. I shall further discuss the works of Franz Steiner and Mary Douglas, which represent the most comprehensive critique of Smith and Frazer and which have come largely to constitute the present academic opinion regarding purity and defilement. My own approach to the topic of purity in the book of Ezekiel, although primarily textual, is significantly influenced by the structural methodology presented by Mary Douglas.

0.31 This study focuses on three basic elements of the ideology of purity and defilement: a) the accusations directed against the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants; b) the visionary destruction of the city as a result of its self-defilement; and c) Ezekiel's vision of the new Israel, now cleansed of its impurities.<sup>2</sup> These three themes constitute the structure of an ideology that came to represent the normative world-view of post-exilic Israel, which comprised the context for the formation of the Priestly law, the legislative realisation of Ezekiel's ideology.

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<sup>2</sup> Since the discourse of purity and identity in Ezekiel is restricted to "the house of Israel" alone, my analysis will not include prophecies regarding the nations.

## ***1.0 The Rhetoric of Defilement***

1.01 There are two preliminary considerations which need to be clarified before I can proceed with my analysis of the rhetoric of defilement in the book of Ezekiel. The first consideration is the theoretical framework within which this study operates: the history of anthropological/sociological approaches to the topic of purity and the applicability of existing methods to the prophecies in the book of Ezekiel. The second consideration is the direction of discourse in the book of Ezekiel itself: the theories regarding whom the prophecies of defilement and destruction are in fact aimed at and the validity of these solutions in light of the textual evidence. For practical reasons, I shall turn to the more general review of methodological approaches before focusing my attention on the more specific discussion of discourse and audience.

### ***1.1 Purity and Theory***

1.11 In 1888, the 9th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* was published, containing an extensive article on the term "taboo" written by Sir James Frazer. Although Frazer's definition and interpretation of rules regarding purity and defilement did not represent a radically new understanding of the phenomenon we now generally call taboo, his writings on this subject nevertheless constitute one of the first attempts at a comprehensive, cross cultural interpretation of taboo and

purity. The opening paragraph of Frazer's article reads as follows.

Taboo (also written Tabu and Tapu) is the name given to a system of religious prohibitions which attained its fullest development in Polynesia (from Hawaii to New Zealand ...), but of which under different names traces may be discovered in most parts of the world. (Frazer 1888:15)

In accord with this global generalisation, Frazer freely applies the Polynesian term taboo to describe certain restrictive rules in the Hebrew Bible, comparing, for example, the Nazirite vows described in Leviticus to rules surrounding a tabooed person in Polynesia. Likewise, he equates the unclean status of a Hebrew mother after childbirth to the state of taboo ascribed to her Polynesian counterpart. Most illustrative of Frazer's approach is perhaps his observation of trans-cultural parallels in regard to the notion of corpse defilement.

Any one who touches a dead body was "unclean" for seven days; what he touched became unclean, and could communicate its uncleanness to any other person who touched it. At the end of seven days the unclean person washed his clothes, bathed himself, and was clean (Num. xix. 11, 14, 19, 22). In Polynesia, as we have seen, anyone who touched a dead body was taboo; what he touched became taboo, and could communicate the infection to any one who touched it; and one of the ceremonies for getting rid of the taboo was washing. (Frazer 1888:17)

1.111 Frazer's works have long been called into question and have been replaced by less generalised, yet more comprehensive theories regarding the nature of taboo and defilement, and of laws to ensure the maintenance of purity in a given society. What Frazer failed to do was to pursue the path which he himself had indicated in the introductory paragraph of the article cited above. While he defines taboo as a system of religious prohibitions, he does not analyse this system in regard

to its own social context, but merely lists a number of indicative phenomena, which he compares to other isolated phenomena found in unrelated cultures. On this basis he concludes that "some of the most characteristic features of taboo ... have been found [in] more or less all primitive races," to which he adds that it is interesting "to mark the traces of such customs among civilized peoples, e.g. Jews, Greeks, and Romans" (Frazer 1888:17).

1.112 This last remark is indicative of Frazer's larger view regarding the mentality of "primitive races," which is characterised by an inability to distinguish between the categories of sacred and defiled. This confusion within the primitive mind is the cause for undifferentiated fear which ultimately results in primitive superstition. Thus, Frazer was able to make his famous distinction between magic, based on superstition, and religion, based on ethical faith.<sup>3</sup> Since Frazer regarded the Hebrew religion to be culturally advanced as compared to the spiritual practice of Polynesian peoples, he saw the notions of purity and defilement found in the Hebrew Bible as mere remnants of Israel's own primitive past.

1.12 Frazer claimed to be heavily indebted to William Robertson Smith who, unlike his self-acclaimed follower, transcended the limitations of armchair anthropology and collected a vast amount of cultural data from the Near East by active observation. There are, to be sure, points where the two scholars agree, but on the whole they could have hardly differed more in regard to anthropological theory. Smith writes:

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<sup>3</sup> This view is fully developed in *The Golden Bough* (publ. 1890).

Holy and unclean things have this in common, that in both cases certain restrictions lie on men's use of and contact with them, and that the breach of these restrictions involves supernatural dangers. (Smith 1957:446)

Clearly, Robertson Smith does not suggest that "the primitive" is unable to distinguish between the categories of sacred and defiled, but merely points out that these categories share the common characteristic of being dangerous to human beings who come in contact with them. He proposes that taboo and ritual were based on the establishment and preservation of social fellowship. Regarding sacrifice, for example, Smith suggested that the ritual slaughter and consumption of an animal was based on the desire to be in joyous fellowship with the gods, who join the worshippers at the sacrificial altar and feast in communion with them (Smith 1957:227).<sup>4</sup> This idea was later taken up by Emile Durkheim, who made it the basis of his social scientific theory of religion. Robertson Smith's main contribution thus lies in his recognition that ritual has a social function and is not a magical effort to avert supernatural terror. Beliefs and practices regarding the avoidance of defilement and the maintenance of purity ought to be seen in the same manner, as part of a social system that works toward its own preservation.

1.13 This is the central idea of Franz Steiner's book *Taboo* (1956). In a remarkably thorough fashion, Steiner reviews previous theories of taboo, which, as he claims, have advanced little since the time of Frazer. He argues passionately that

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<sup>4</sup> A similar view was proposed by Julius Wellhausen as early as 1878, eleven years before the publication of Smith's *The Religion of the Semites*. Smith was a close friend of Wellhausen and had in fact written the preface to his *Prolegomena*. Thus, it is not unlikely that Smith's theory was influenced by Wellhausen's reading of the Old Testament.

"the customs we call taboo neither represent one kind of institution nor pose one kind of sociological problem." (Steiner 1956:141) Instead, the entire social system must be taken into consideration if the function of taboo within a society is to be determined. This function, he concludes, is the definition and localisation of danger.

... all situations of danger, not merely those created by taboo-breaking, are socially or culturally defined, and ... it is precisely this relation between the defined danger and the restrictive pattern which we should study in each case. For until taboos are involved, a danger is not defined and cannot be coped with by institutionalized behaviour.

(Steiner 1956:146)

1.131 Taboo, according to him, is not based on an undifferentiated fear of supernatural dangers, but in fact defines these very dangers in an attempt to avoid whatever may be considered threatening to the society. Once these dangers are defined, they can be approached in the right manner and averted, so that society is preserved. This view is certainly less ethnocentric than Frazer's and Robertson Smith's and it also has the advantage of being systemic. To determine the nature and function of any system, it is necessary to examine the internal relationships among all its components, as well as the system's own relationship to its larger cultural context. Failure to do so necessarily results in piecemeal observations, the dangers of which are apparent in Frazer's works.

1.14 The theory put forth in Mary Douglas' study *Purity and Danger* is similar to that of Steiner, although she takes his conclusions one step further. Taboo and ritual, she argues, not only define potential dangers and prescribe ways of avoiding them, but in fact define the very categories upon which a society's world-view is built.

Rules about pollution and uncleanness should not be seen, as negative precepts, but rather as positive attempts to pattern the social and natural experiences of a particular community. She writes:

If we shun dirt, it is not because of craven fear, still less dread of holy terror. Nor do our ideas about disease account for the range of behavior in cleaning and avoiding dirt. Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organize the environment. (Douglas 1966:2)

Her underlying premise is that human beings tend to impose classification systems on their environment. A culture's classification system thus represents its general world-view.

1.141 Anomalies are an inevitable by-product of any classification system, so that every culture is confronted by elements in their environment that cannot be properly categorised. These anomalies are considered dangerous, since they defy the logic underlying the natural and social order. As such, they represent disorder, which is a threat to any society, since it destroys existing classification patterns and contains unlimited potential for patterning (Douglas 1966:94). This is the major difference between Steiner and Douglas. While Steiner sees purity and taboo as part of an essentially negative system,<sup>5</sup> centred around the definition and avoidance of dangers, Douglas sees purity rules as constructive ideas to pattern one's environment. Danger and taboo are merely implicit in the defiance of a particular system of purity. Thus, to avoid chaos, the number of patterns recognised by a society must be limited;

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<sup>5</sup> Already Durkheim in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* had referred to this system as "the negative cult." cf. Durkheim 1965.



therefore, anomalies must be excluded as much as possible.

1.142 Likewise, the boundaries between categories within a classification system must be kept separate, since the disintegration of recognised patterns necessarily implies a breakdown of order. Douglas refers to the levitical dietary laws to illustrate her point.

Those species are unclean which are imperfect members of their class, or whose class itself confounds the general scheme of the world. (Douglas 1966:55)

An animal that has cloven hooves, but does not chew the cud is not a whole member of its class and is therefore improper for human consumption, just as marine animals that have scales but no fins (cf. Lev. 11). In other words, "clean" is defined as that which falls wholly into a given category, "unclean" or "defiling" is that which does not. Unclean elements are a threat to the stability of the community, since they exemplify a disintegration of categories, the breakdown of order. Taboo and purity rules thus serve to keep the categories within a classification system intact, by defining the proper classes and by endorsing rules by which they can be kept separate.

1.15 A somewhat similar explanation has been suggested by Emanuel Feldman and Jacob Milgrom. Both scholars follow Douglas in her analysis of purity and taboo as a system that serves to maintain the ideal patterns of a given society, but both argue further that the biblical ideas of impurity are based on the central binary opposition of life and death, the former being the primary characteristic of God. Feldman writes:

Throughout the Bible, *ḥayîm* is almost synonymous with God. The goodness of God can only be witnessed in the

'*ereṣ ha-ḥayîm* (Psalms 27:13, 116:9, Isaiah 38:11); one walks before Him in the '*ôr ha-ḥayîm*, "the light of life" (Psalms 56:14); fear of Him is the source of *ḥayîm* (Proverbs 14:27); those who find Him find *ḥayîm* (Proverbs 8:35); those who do justice walk in His statute of *ḥayîm* (Ezekiel 33:15).  
(Feldman 1977:15)

If God is synonymous with life, the ultimate opposite of life must be the ultimate opposite of God.

God is the Lord of life, and while he rules death *and* life, He consciously withdraws from death and separates Himself from it. Death thus represents the absence of a potential relationship with God. It is likely therefore, that the biblical/rabbinic laws of *tum'ah* represent not taboos, but a manifestation of the absence of life, which is to say the absence of this relationship. (Feldman 1977:29)

For Feldman, this binary opposition between life and death--relationship with God and absence thereof--is the basis of all laws of defilement in the biblical/rabbinic writings. He argues that even laws of purity which are apparently unrelated to death can be explained in light of this dichotomy. Rules regarding menstrual bleeding, for example, are based on the understanding that menstruation is synonymous with the loss of the life force (נפש) located in the blood. (Feldman 1977:37)

1.151 Similarly, Jacob Milgrom has argued that the biblical laws of impurity are based on the central dichotomy of life and death; however he associates life with holiness (קדוּשָׁה), rather than the relationship with God.

קדוּשָׁה is the antonym of טָמֵא, "impure." If טָמֵא stands for death, קדוּשָׁה must stand for the forces of life. The verb קָדַשׁ not only means "separate from" but "separate to." Since God is the quintessence of holiness and Israel is enjoined, וְהָיִיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי [יהוה] "Be you holy because I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev 11:44), Israel is therefore instructed to observe the life-giving and life-

sustaining commandments of God. (Milgrom 1989:105-6)

These commandments to be holy, by embracing that which is life-giving and rejecting that which represents death, are ritual as well as moral injunctions. Referring to Ex. 34:6-7, Milgrom notes that the holiness of God is associated with his moral attributes (Milgrom 1989:106). The implication is that the Hebrew laws of impurity are not so much taboos, but moral precepts that would enable Israel to choose life, not death.

1.16 While Milgrom's and Feldman's approach to the subject of purity is intriguing, their method is seriously flawed. There is ample evidence in the Hebrew Bible to suggest, that death, as the opposite of life, is not necessarily the opposite of purity. Abraham, for example, is said to have died "in good old age" (בְּשָׂיִי כֹּה טוֹבָה; Gen 25:8). The formula וְשָׂיִי כֹּה יָמָיו--an old man and full of days--is used to describe the death of Job (Job 42:17), David (I Chr. 29:28), and Jehoiada (II Chr. 24:15). Even in Ezekiel and in the Priestly tradition, death is said to be defiling only when a living person comes in contact with it. Out of the 226 occurrences of the root מָוּת in the books Leviticus, Numbers and Ezekiel, only 46 are in some way related to death. Thus, death is clearly not impure in and of itself. Defilement occurs only when the proper boundary between life and death is blurred or broken, e.g. if a living person touches a dead body (cf. Lev.19:11). Furthermore, a survey of rabbinic literature reveals that later commentators of Jewish law did not equate impurity and sin. While not condoning actions that lead to impurity, the rabbis saw impurity as an undesirable, yet inevitable condition of human existence that needs to be dealt with in a constructive manner through social regulations. In short, the life-death

dichotomy is may form a significant part in the schematisation of Hebrew thought, but it is not its fundamental principle.

1.17 Purity regulations ought not to be regarded as mere superstition, but neither can they be reduced to a simple existential dichotomy of life and death. Reflecting to a large extent a given society's world view and regulating its social relationships, purity should be treated as a social force, a force, following Douglas and Steiner, which preserves and constructs. Purity rules function to keep disorder at bay and to preserve the perceived cosmic and social order of a particular culture. However, societies are not homogenous entities but are characterised by forms of structured inequality. Differences between socio-economic systems are not accounted for by the presence or absence of hierarchy or equality, but generally by the way inequality is structured. Consequently, the perceived social or cosmic order to be defined and preserved by social mechanisms such as purity regulations or taboos is not unified throughout a social system. In other words, what is preserved is not only order but also the distribution of power. "Culture becomes a vehicle for the maintenance of and reproduction of dominant-subordinate relations..." (Clark and Davis 1989:651).

1.171 Implicit in this line of argument is the assumption that individuals or social groups that control systems of purity and defilement hold an advantage over other social groups, insofar as they can determine the ideological boundaries that characterise the normative world-view of their larger society. As Enzensberger (1972:47) has put it: "The one who can defile others, whether clean himself or not, is

the boss." The Canadian sociologists Clark and Davis (1989), for example, have convincingly argued, that gender inequality in Anglo-Canadian culture is maintained and supported by ideas of defilement, which are controlled by men, but are of greater concern to women. Female identity, they argue, is more vulnerable, precisely because it is largely dependent on being in conformity with the recognised norms of purity and defilement.

1.18 The conclusions of Clark and Davis are to a large extent applicable to the textual study of the book of Ezekiel. Although the discourse available to us is exclusively unilateral, the fact that the book describes a highly charged, antagonistic coexistence between two Israelite groups at the time of the exile indicates that there was at least the possibility for a bilateral discourse between the two communities. Furthermore, Ezekiel's prophecies were canonised as part of a sacred scripture, as were the writings of his ideological successors, the compilers of the P tradition, that came to form the legal material of Leviticus/Numbers; no comparable tradition regarding the Jerusalemite remnant at the time of the exile exists. It appears that the identity of exilic Judah came to be the normative identity of post-exilic Israel and Judaism from the second temple period onward. Thus, the rhetoric of purity in the book of Ezekiel has not only a creative and preservative function, keeping disorder at bay, but indeed served to establish and maintain a position of power and authority for the exilic community over against their counterparts in the homeland. The Jerusalemite community eventually vanished from the national memory of later Judaism. It was, for all intents and purposes, non-existent, as Ezekiel had posited

in his prophecies.

## 1.2 Ezekiel's Prophecies and the Direction of Discourse

1.21 Before commencing my study with an analysis of Ezekiel's oracles of doom against Jerusalem, the direction of discourse in these prophecies must be identified. I shall proceed from the premise that Ezekiel, the active voice of the book and likely its principal author, had his *Sitz im Leben* among the Judean *golah* of the first deportation. Consequently, the prophet's audience and support group consisted mainly of Jerusalem's nobility and intelligentsia, which Nebuchadrezzar had resettled after his Judean campaign in 597 B.C.E. However, most of Ezekiel's oracles of doom against the city appear to be directed against the Jerusalemite remnant that was spared from deportation, not against the *golah*. In Ez. 21, the prophet is instructed to prophesy towards the south and to preach against the southern forests (Ez. 21:2).

Human being, set your  
face towards the south  
and preach against the  
southern forests and  
prophesy against the  
fields of the south.  
(Ez. 21:2)

בן-אדם שים פניך דרך  
תימנה והטף אל-דרום  
והנבא אל-יער השדה  
נגב:

In Ez. 22:2 and 24:6 he is asked to judge the 'bloody city' (עיר הַדָּמִים) and the object of Ezekiel's attack in the analogies of chs. 16 and 23 is unmistakably the city of Jerusalem.

Human being, make  
known to Jerusalem her  
obscenities! (Ez. 16:2)

בן-אדם הודע  
את-ירושלם את-תועבתיה:

1.211 The apocalyptic vision of Ez. 8-11 takes place exclusively in Jerusalem. The prophet reports that he is geographically removed from the *golah* and brought to the city to witness her obscenities (cf. Ez. 8:3). The fact that Ez. 8:1 mentions the elders of Judah in a Babylonian setting suggests that the *golah* had its own political and social structure independent of that operative in Jerusalem at the same time. Zimmerli has already pointed to this, but merely concludes that the presence of elders in Babylon implies a continuity of office (Zimmerli 1979:236). This conclusion applies to the exilic community; however, the text mentions elders not only in the Babylonian context but also in Jerusalem (Ez. 8:11). Since the two groups are geographically separated, and since both seem to have a more or less stratified council of elders, it would not be plausible to regard them as the same social body; therefore Ezekiel's reference to the elders of Judah in Babylon indicates not only a continuity of office in regard to the *golah* but also a divergence of social groups.

1.212 Other oracles of doom are directed against the בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, 'the sons of Israel' (e.g. Ez. 2:3) or the בֵּית-יִשְׂרָאֵל, 'the house of Israel' (e.g. Ez. 3:4,7), both of which are ambiguous designations that may refer to the *golah* as well as the remnant. Only two oracles are specified as being addressed to the זִקְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, 'the elders of Israel' (Ez. 14:1, 20:1), which are said to be in the presence of the prophet and who must therefore be regarded as fellow exiles.

1.22 Thus, we are confronted with the following situation. Ezekiel preaches

in Babylon among the Judean *golah*, but the central object of his prophecies is a community that is not present among his listeners. This textual tension has long been noted by commentators, and several solutions have been proposed. Bertholet (1936:xii) points out that "it is often unclear whom the words of Ezekiel in fact concern, the people or the exiles" and argues that the prophet must have had a "twofold sphere of activity" (*doppeltes Wirkungsfeld*), travelling back and forth between Jerusalem and Babylon. Horst's (1953) solution is similar, in that he finds it likely that the prophet was active in Jerusalem before 593 B.C.E., but that he was relocated in one of the later deportations to Babylon. Herntrich (1932), for his part, resorts to the standard reaction of historical-critical exegetes and blames a later redactor for apparent textual conflicts. The oracles against Jerusalem, he argues, stem from a Jerusalemite prophet before the fall of the city in 587 B.C.E., while the exilic setting was superimposed on the book by a later editor.

1.221 A more radical solution to the problem was suggested by Torrey (1970, orig. publ. 1930), who argued that the original prophecy in the book of Ezekiel was a pseudepigraphic work from the time around 130 B.C.E., referring back to the time of Manasseh. This original prophecy was edited shortly afterwards by a redactor who, by a number of textual interpolations, imposed a Babylonian setting on the text. The aim of the reconstructed prophecy was to provide Jerusalemites with an effective historical rhetoric against the Samaritan community living amongst them. Torrey's solution to the problem is interesting and provocative, especially since he, more than anyone else, recognised the propagandistic component in Ezekiel's prophecies; there



is, however, no indication as to how the book could have served as a polemical writing against Samaritans, while the oracles presented in the book are in fact directed against the city of Jerusalem.

1.222 More recent commentators (Eichrodt 1959, Zimmerli 1979, Greenberg 1983) have tended to minimise the problem by theologising it. Jerusalem in Ezekiel's prophecies, they argue, must be seen as a *pars pro toto* representation for the entire people of Israel, including the *golah*, to whom the oracles were delivered. Greenberg's statement that "the moral position of the exiles, their stance before God, was at that time indistinguishable from that of the homelanders" (Greenberg 1983:16) is representative of the present consensus.

1.23 Since this study is concerned with the rhetoric of the book of Ezekiel rather than its history of composition or its theological value, I shall not enter the debate by looking for extra-textual factors to resolve a textual problem. It is, however, crucial for my thesis to show how the text itself attempts to reconcile its inherent tension. A direct explanation is not given; the book states that Ezekiel lived among the exiles on the river Chebar, and there are no reports about the prophet travelling back and forth between Babylon and Jerusalem. Thus, his sole sphere of activity was, as far as the text is concerned, the community of Jehoiakin's *golah*.

1.231 Notwithstanding the singularity of Ezekiel's geographic setting, his prophecies are implicitly concerned with two communities, the *golah* and the Jerusalemite remnant. The former, of course, represents his sole sphere of activity, while the latter embodies the actual object of his attacks. The textual discourse in

the oracles of doom against Jerusalem thus involves two distinct audiences: one real, one implied. The Jerusalemite community, which represents Ezekiel's targetted or implied audience, may have never heard his prophecies. Perhaps this is the meaning of the rather cryptic motif of dumbness. In Ez. 3:26, the prophet is overcome with dumbness, from which he does not recover until a messenger arrives from Jerusalem to report the fall of the city (Ez. 33:21). Yet, Ezekiel preaches and prophesies continually, even before he regains his ability to speak. Clearly, the prophet is not unable to speak, but his targetted audience is unable to hear his words since he is geographically removed from them. YHWH hints at this when he warns Ezekiel that the house of Israel will not listen to him, although he gives a different explanation for Jerusalem's reluctance to receive the prophet's message (cf. Ez. 3:7). The messenger of Ez. 33:21 then represents nothing but a textual link of communication between the *golah* and Jerusalem. Whether this communication was in fact bilateral and whether Ezekiel's prophecies could hereby be related to Jerusalem, just as information about the city had been related to the *golah*, is quite unimportant. It is significant that, as far as the text is concerned, the two communities which had previously been isolated from each other have now established a communicative link. Until then, the oracles against Jerusalem, spoken to the *golah*, present as little a problem as do oracles against the nations, spoken to Israelites.

1.24 Overholt (1981) has convincingly argued that a prophet requires validation by his support group to give authority to his prophecies. Since the *golah* constituted Ezekiel's sphere of activity, we may assume that his support group is also found

among the exilic community. This hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that the *golah* is excluded from the prophet's oracles of doom. This evokes the question of what interest the *golah* would have in hearing oracles of doom against the city of Jerusalem, from which they have been removed. I propose that, by condemning the city and its inhabitants for their impurity, Ezekiel gave expression to the *golah's* antagonism in regard to the Jerusalemite remnant, with which they were competing for the status of being the true remnant of Israel. By invalidating their religious and national identity, he was able to exclude the "homelanders" from the house of Israel. At the same time, however, the prophet asserted that his own community--the *golah*--was to be identified with the only true remnant of Israel, the national and religious identity of which was based on a particular system of purity which was endorsed, expanded and canonised by the returning *golah*.

## ***2.0 Idolaters and Prostitutes - The Defilement***

2.01 All three centres of social formation which Belo observed as the basis of Israel's post-exilic system of purity may be identified in the book of Ezekiel, although the focus is clearly on the latter two - bodies/sex and ideology/religious sacrifice.<sup>6</sup> Bodily pollution and sexual defilement on the one hand and the desecration of Israel's national sanctuary on the other constitute two major themes in the prophetic text. The latter is most vividly described in Ez. 8, the first part of Ezekiel's great apocalyptic vision, while the former is best exemplified by the parable of the two prostitutes, Oholah and Oholibah, in Ez. 23. Both themes are united in Ez. 16, by Ezekiel's condemnation of "Jerusalem the harlot", which employs the imagery of sexual defilement as an analogy for cultic impurity. These three chapters shall therefore constitute the central core of my analysis of Ezekiel's rhetoric regarding the impurity of the city of Jerusalem.

### ***2.1 Cultic Obscenities - Ezekiel 8***

2.101 Ez. 8 is Ezekiel's first visionary journey to the city of Jerusalem. It is

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<sup>6</sup> Defilement through the consumption of food is mentioned only once in Ez. 4:14. Because of its minor position in the text, I shall not deal with this factor here.

part of a larger apocalyptic vision (Ez. 8-11), which culminates in the destruction of Judah's capital city, the rationale for which is given in Ez. 8. In the course of this chapter, Ezekiel observes four cultic obscenities--תועבות--which illustrate the complete defilement and corruption of Jerusalem and its inhabitants during the time of the Babylonian exile. Since the visionary experience of Ez. 8-11 is set entirely in Jerusalem, the cultic obscenities of ch. 8 are clearly intended as an attack on the city and its inhabitants. The spatial setting is an element that must not be disregarded, for we shall see that it is in the interplay of space and action that the city's pollution is defined. As a result, the defilement described in Ez. 8 is contained exclusively in Jerusalem, increasing in intensity and significance toward the direction of the temple, Judah's national shrine.

2.102 In their analysis of Ez. 8, scholars have generally searched for certain historical realities behind the four obscenities mentioned in this chapter. Exegetes from Herrmann to Zimmerli have tried to explain Jerusalem's guilt of pollution by defining a particular cultic practice that would correlate to Ezekiel's visionary experience. In regard to the third obscenity, the women weeping for Tammuz (Ez. 8:14), opinions were more or less unified. The rite was seen as the worship of the Babylonian deity Tammuz, whose death and subsequent resurrection was celebrated as a mimetic representation of the vegetative cycle of grain. The historicity of the other three rites was generally more disputed. In any case, the attempt has been to correlate the four obscenities with existing cultic practices that may or may not have taken place in Jerusalem at that time.

2.103 While this approach to the text is helpful in rounding out our picture of Ancient Near Eastern religious practices, it fails to give a comprehensive explanation of Jerusalem's impurity, providing instead a piecemeal explanation. Only Eichrodt has attempted a more systemic solution to the problem. In regard to the fourth obscenity he writes:

... it is not till this point that the shameless profanation of the sanctuary comes to a climax, in so far as it leads to a direct insult to Yahweh. It becomes clear, at the same time, how little the condemnation of all these cultic misdoings is concerned with the mere defence of an external ritual holiness of the place. The decisive factor is rather the actual inward detachment from that holy awe which is Yahweh's due and the foundation of all communion with him. (Eichrodt 1970:128)

2.104 Eichrodt's reading is reflective of his general view of a universal Israel, in which the individual encounter with the transcendent deity Yahweh is based not on cult and action, but on a personal predisposition towards God. This view is an expression of good Protestant faith with its emphasis on faith over works, which may therefore be useful for homiletic purposes, but it fails to take into consideration an important aspect of the text. The prophet not only has visionary experiences of cultic obscenities, but also moves about in his visions, starting at the outer entrance of the temple and gradually moving towards its centre of holiness. In the course of this movement, the guilt of impurity appears to increase simultaneously, as is indicated by the words spoken by YHWH after each of the first three obscenities: "You will see still greater obscenities" - תשוב תראה תועבות גדלות (Ez. 8:6b, 13b, 15b). I have suggested earlier that the prophet's spatial removal from Babylon to Jerusalem was

crucial to determine the direction of discourse in Ez. 8-11. Likewise, I would suggest, that the prophet's movement within the city is equally important to establish a comprehensive explanation of Ezekiel's view of cultic impurity.

2.11 The prophet observes the first of the four great obscenities at the north gate of the city (Ez. 8:3b $\beta$ -5).

... and he brought me to Jerusalem, in visions of God, to the entrance of the inner gate that faces north, where the seat of the statue of jealousy is provoking jealousy. And see: there was the glory of the god of Israel, like the appearance I had seen in the valley. And he said to me: "Human being, look to the north!" So I looked up towards the north, and see: north of the altar gate was this image of jealousy in the entrance.

ותבא אתי ירושלמה  
כמראות אלהים אל-פתח  
שער הפנימית הפונה  
צפונה אשר-שם מושב  
סמל הקנאה המקנה:  
והנה-שם כבוד אלהי  
ישראל כמראה אשר  
ראיתי בנקעה; ויאמר  
אלי בן-אדם שא-נא  
עיניך דרך צפונה  
ואשא עיני דרך צפונה  
והנה מצפון לשער  
המזבח סמל הקנאה  
הזה כבאה:

YHWH's appearance before the northern gate (vs. 4) is not surprising, and no further explanation is given. Jerusalem is the centre of Yahwistic worship, especially after Josiah's reforms to centralise the cult and to limit it to the capital city alone. It is the location of YHWH's sole sanctuary, harbouring the presence of Judah's national deity. The reference to the 'glory of the god of Israel' is therefore not to be taken as an unexpected sight, but rather as an affirmation that YHWH is precisely there, where one would expect him to be--in Jerusalem. But, the reference has yet another function, namely to counterpoint the image of jealousy (הקנאה) and thus to

illustrate the first great obscenity.

2.111 Eichrodt following Herrmann argues that the term אֵלֶּה should be translated as "passionate love" (*Liebesleidenschaft*), and that the אֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁרָה therefore denotes a statue of the "goddess of love" - Asherah (Eichrodt 1970:122). Eichrodt further argues that the worship of Asherah implies that YHWH has been given a consort. "Sexual desire and pleasure, hitherto excluded from the picture of God, are now introduced into it. Yahweh is thus degraded to the level of a nature-god, with an ambivalent moral will, inclusive of evil as well as good" (Eichrodt 1970:123). Unfortunately, there is no textual indication that the text of Ez. 8:3-5 juxtaposes an ethical god over against a morally ambivalent nature god, so that Eichrodt's reading is based exclusively on Frazer's distinction between ethical faith and primitive magic (thus *degradation* to the level of a nature-god).

2.112 Eichrodt's reading has been refuted also on linguistic grounds, most convincingly by Zimmerli who pointed out that "in verbal and substantival usage, אֵלֶּה is repeatedly a designation for the jealous anger of Yahweh against everything hostile to him" (Zimmerli 1979:239). Greenberg probably captures the meaning of the term best by describing it as "the passionate resentment one feels at seeing what is being given to another" (Greenberg 1983:168).

2.113 Ez. 8:3-5 does not deal with the question of how YHWH ought to be worshipped, or whether his character is ethical or not. Rather, it posits the juxtaposition of two individual deities, as is indicated by the close textual proximity of the 'glory of the god of Israel' and the 'image of jealousy'. The picture presented



by the prophet must be seen as follows: YHWH, the national god of Judah is inside the city in which his sole sanctuary is located. The statue of jealousy is located outside the city bounds, north of the north gate. The mention of the gate in this context is significant. According to Mary Douglas (1966:121) "all margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that the shape of the fundamental experience is altered. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins." The symbolic structure of Israel's religious ideology was centred the temple/palace system in Jerusalem. Walls around the temple/palace complex or around the city in which YHWH abided must be seen as symbolic boundaries by which Judah's national deity was "set apart" - *שִׁטָּף*. The gate at which Ezekiel observes the first great obscenity is a marginal passage way in the external boundary of the city. Being a liminal element within the structure, it represents an element of greatest danger, since it posits the potential for uncontrolled contact of inside and outside elements. The purity of the city, characterised by the exclusive presence of Judah's national deity YHWH, has therefore been jeopardised by the presence of another deity, whose statue is located at a liminal point in the structural layout of the city. Thus, the 'glory of the god of Israel', which Ezekiel encounters in vs. 4 is no longer "set apart".

2.12 The second great obscenity (Ez. 8:7-11) is located further inside the city, toward the central shrine of YHWH, at the court entrance, likely the gate to the original palace forecourt (cf. Zimmerli 1979:240). Again, the scene takes place at a passage way, a liminal position, signalling potential danger.

And he brought me to the  
court entrance, and I

וַיָּבֵא אֵתִי אֶל-פֶּתַח  
הַחֲצֵר וְאֶרְאֶה וְהִנֵּה

looked, and see: there was a hole in the wall. And he said to me: "Human being, dig into the wall!" So I dug into the wall and see, there was an opening. And he said to me: "Come and see the evil obscenities they are committing here!" So I came and looked, and see, there was every creeping thing and unclean beast and all the idols of the house of Israel engraved upon the wall, all around, all around. And 70 men from the elders of the house of Israel stood before them, and Jaazaniah ben Shaphan stood among them, and each one had his censer in his hand, and a cloud of incense smoke was ascending.

חר-אחר בקיר: ויאמר  
אלי כן-אדר חתר-בא  
בקיר ואחר בקיר  
והנה פתח אחר: ויאמר  
אלי בא וראה  
את-התועבות הרעות אשר  
הם עשים פה: ואבוא  
ואראה והנה כל-תכנית  
רמש ובהמה שקץ וכל  
גלולי בית ישראל  
מחקה על-הקיר סביב  
סביב: ושבעים איש  
מזקני בית-ישראל  
ויאזניהו בן-שפן  
עמר בתוכם עמרים  
לפניהם ואיש מקטרתו  
כידו ועתר ענן-הקטרת  
עלה:

2.121 Opinions regarding the historical reality of the cult are divided and cover a wide range of possibilities, ranging from Egyptian scarab cults (Bertholet 1936:32; Fohrer 1955:51) to Babylonian fertility rituals (Greenberg 1983:169). However, very little has been said about why the cult, Egyptian, Babylonian or otherwise, should be defiling at all. Greenberg has hinted at a more general explanation, when he added to his interpretation that the 'unclean beasts' (שִׁקְץ) have a cross reference in Lev. 11:10-42, where the term is used for creatures forbidden for food, due to their uncleanness. Zimmerli went further in his interpretation, noting that

this expression [זָקֵשׁ הַחַיָּה], which occurs eight times in Lev. 11 and again in Lev. 7:21 and Is. 66:17, contains a ritual qualification. A comparison of Lev. 11:10 (זָקֵשׁ הַחַיָּה לֶכֶת) with 11:8 (זָקֵשׁ הַחַיָּה לֶכֶת) shows זָקֵשׁ as synonymous with זָקֵשׁ. Similarly, Lev. 11 shows that in the animal world everything which points to hybrid creatures is avoided as זָקֵשׁ. (Zimmerli 1979:240)

Zimmerli's last point is well in accord with Mary Douglas' analysis of "The Abominations of Leviticus." Douglas has pointed out that "those species are unclean which are imperfect members of their class, or whose class itself confounds the general scheme of the world" (Douglas 1966:55). These would include animals which part their hooves, but do not chew the cud or vice versa, fish without scales or other animals which do not fit the established system of classification. Animals that fall between two categories by displaying characteristic features of more than one class, defy the natural order, and are therefore considered impure. If, as Zimmerli has argued, זָקֵשׁ is synonymous with hybrid creatures, i.e. creatures that cross the boundaries of classification, the presence of these animals would indeed present a threat to Ezekiel's religious ideology, since they defy the structure of its underlying world view. This is especially true, since carvings of these creatures are found in an unsuspected opening in the wall, a marginal element in the physical structure of the boundary that separates the palace/temple complex from the outside world, which is comparatively secular.

2.122 For a full interpretation of the passage it is essential to note the presence of the 70 elders of the house of Israel. One of the men is identified by name as Jaazaniah son of Shaphan. Eichrodt (1970:125), Zimmerli (1979:241) and Greenberg

(1983:170) have pointed out that the individual in question was likely a member of the influential Shaphan family, which had previously been supportive of Josiah's reforms to centralise Yahwistic worship. If this is the case, Jaazaniah's mention in the text presents a dreadful irony, in that even those whose ancestors had acted to purify Yahwistic religion are now among those responsible for its desecration.

2.123 In addition to this reading, I would like to point out that the name of Jaazaniah ben Shaphan offers a second possibility of interpretation, equally ironical. The word *shaphan* (שָׁפָן) in Hebrew signifies a certain rodent, generally identified as the rock badger. Lev. 11:5 list the שָׁפָן as one of the animals unclean for human eating, "because it chews the cud, but does not part the hoof." In other words, the *shaphan* is in fact one of those hybrid creatures that are considered impure because they defy the classificatory laws of nature. Ezekiel may have intended a pun here, saying that the elders of Israel in Jerusalem are so corrupt, they even include the son of an unclean rock badger among them.

2.124 As for the other 69 men, not much is said about them. However, the designation "elders of the house of Judah" (זִקְנֵי בֵּית-יְהוּדָה) indicates that they were influential people in the city, occupying a high position in Jerusalem's social hierarchy. This indication is very significant, since the actions of socially influential individuals, cultic or secular, are associated with power and control. Ritual misbehaviour on their part is therefore not merely an uncontrolled, negative force within the social structure, but is indeed a threat to the structure from the very top of its hierarchy. Douglas points out that "those holding office in the explicit part of

the structure tend to be credited with consciously controlled powers, in contrast with those whose role is less explicit and who tend to be credited with unconscious, uncontrollable powers, menacing those in better defined positions" (Douglas 1966:101). Since the ritual misbehaviour of those responsible for the maintenance of the social system presents one of the worst possible dangers to a hierarchical structure, the system, if it is to preserve itself, has to adjust to this situation to prevent its self-destruction.

First consider the case of the man in a position of authority, who abuses the secular powers of his office. If it is clear that he is acting wrongly, out of role, he is not entitled to the spiritual power which is vested in the role. Then there should be scope for some shift in the pattern of beliefs to accommodate his defection. He ought to enter the class of witches, exerting involuntary, unjust powers instead of intentionally controlled powers against wrong doers. For the official who abuses his office is as illegitimate as an usurper, an incubus, a spanner in the works, a dead weight on the social system.

(Douglas 1966:106)

2.125 The cultic misbehaviour of the elders of Israel in Jerusalem is clearly such an abuse of power that cannot be tolerated. The implication contained in the text is that the elders in Jerusalem have lost their claim to power, and have, as far as Ezekiel is concerned, moved to a marginal position in Israel's social structure. The question arises: if the elders in Jerusalem have lost their claim to power, who should replace them, who has claim to the power which they have lost? Here I would like to point out, that the text has already mentioned another group of elders, namely the elders of Judah, sitting in the presence of the prophet before his visual experience (Ez. 8:1). I have argued earlier that the mention of these elders indicates a

divergence of social groups, the *golah* and the Jerusalemite remnant, both of which appear to have a more or less stratified system of administration. Yet, Ezekiel refers to the elders of the *golah* as elders of the house of Judah (or Israel, for Ezekiel used the terms interchangeably, cf. Ez. 14:1, 20:1). With the elders of Israel in Jerusalem having lost their position of authority, it would seem plausible that Ezekiel regards the elders of the *golah*, who are given the same designation as their counterparts in Jerusalem, as the new and true leaders of Israel.

2.13 The third great obscenity (Ez. 8:14) is but a brief mention in the text, although it is also the most specific vision of ch. 8.

And he brought me to the  
entrance of the gate to the  
house of YHWH which is  
to the north, and see:  
there were women sitting  
there, bewailing Tammuz.

ויבא אתי אל-פתח  
שער בית-יהוה אשר  
אל-הצפונה והנה-שם  
הנשים יושבים מבכות  
את-התמוז:

The Babylonian god Tammuz was a fertility god, generally associated with grain and grain products. His death and subsequent resurrection was celebrated annually with the end of summer vegetation and its coming to life again. In the mimetic context of Mesopotamian religion, the ritual of mourning for the dying god signified the human participation in the vegetative cycles of nature, an aspect that was foreign to the covenant based cosmology of Israel.

2.131 However, the meaning of the third obscenity is not exclusively contained in the fact that it describes the clash of two rival deities or even cosmologies, as was the case in Ezekiel's first vision. It is significant that Ez. 8:14 is the only scene in the larger vision in which women play an active role. Greenberg points out that the

Tammuz cult was primarily a women's rite (Greenberg 1983:171). This is not surprising, since Mesopotamian fertility cults were generally associated with the principle of female procreativity and usually involved the active participation of women. On this basis, Zimmerli argues that "the custom of lamenting a dead god on the threshold of Yahweh's sanctuary shows that the women who practised it must have regarded it, not as something which would abolish the worship of Yahweh, but rather something which was supplementary to it" (Zimmerli 1979:243). What Zimmerli is implying is that the women's participation in the fertility cult of Tammuz was theoretically not in contradiction with Yahwistic worship, which was altogether lacking the aspect of sympathy with vegetative cycles, and that the cult could therefore be seen as the women's positive contribution to Israelite religion. Why then, one must ask, did Ezekiel condemn the cult, evaluating it as worse than the previous two obscenities. Here Zimmerli merely points out that fertility cults of a dying god were naturally incompatible with the worship of the "living god" in Israel.

2.132 As usual, Eichrodt is a little bolder and more decisive in his analysis.

The mystery of life and fertility, upon which Israel's earthly dependence depends, is no longer dominated by the mighty controlling power of the covenant God, to whom men offer the first fruits of the harvest, as they humbly recognise his undeserved kindness and bring their petitions for his blessing (Deut. 26:1-15); it is torn away from him and handed over to a natural power, whose favour men hope to secure by the due performance of certain magical rites. (Eichrodt 1970:126)

Once more, Eichrodt points to Frazer's distinction between ethical faith, and superstitious magic, classifying the Tammuz cult in the category of the latter. Yet,

Eichrodt, like Frazer, is working within a closed system of analysis, structured by falsely applied theories of social evolutionism intertwined with Protestant triumphalism. He fails to regard the Mesopotamian Tammuz cult in the context of its own religio-cultural system. Instead he views it as an isolated phenomenon which he, by comparison and analogy with other isolated instances of externally similar cults that lie outside his own ideology of faith over rites, dismisses as primitive magic.

2.133 Interestingly, Ezekiel's temple ideology may also be regarded as a closed system, a system which is, however, frequently violated by the intrusion of outside factors. Foreign rites--ethical or magical--performed at liminal positions, such as the first two obscenities of Ez. 8, threaten the stability of the ideo-cosmological system advocated by Ezekiel and, at least in theory, imply a disintegration of the skeletal boundary structure which supports the system, reducing it to a formless void. Likewise, the Tammuz rite of Ez. 8 is performed before the entrance gate to the house of YHWH (בֵּית-יְהוָה פֶּתַח-שַׁעַר), another dangerous, liminal locale, which allows outside elements, i.e. elements outside the closed system of Ezekiel's temple ideology, to enter the sacred (קִדְּשׁ--"set apart") sanctuary of Israel's national deity.

2.134 Let me now return to Zimmerli's earlier observation that the Tammuz cult was a women's rite, whose basic ideology was not in direct opposition to Yahwistic worship.<sup>7</sup> In her analysis of pornographic imagery in prophetic speech, Drorah Setel has pointed out that

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<sup>7</sup> Whether or not Jerusalemite women ever practiced this cult is quite irrelevant here. What is important is that Ezekiel posits the existence of such a rite in his rhetoric against the city.



... concurrent with the centralisation of political power in the development of the monarchy was the expansion of an exclusively male priesthood. An important element of Israelite priestly power was the complicated ritual and ideological system of *tum'ah* and *taharah* . . . . [T]he system of ritual purity, by emphasising the continual need to distinguish the realm of the divine from the realm of the human serves to diminish - or even negate - the power of female human beings in the life process.

(Setel 1985:88-9)

Fertility and reproduction fell into the exclusive domain of the male deity YHWH. The cult of this deity was administered by male priests. Consequently, a cultic intrusion of women into the divine realm of fertility, such as the Tammuz cult, was seen as a threat to the male power in the field of procreation. This threat is intensified by the specific location of the third obscenity, the entrance to the temple forecourt, which was, at least according to Ezekiel's own vision of the pure temple (Ez. 40ff.), prohibited to women.

2.135 Thus, the central idea of the third obscenity was not the clash between an ethical deity and a primitive force of nature, but rather a conflict between male and female power in regard to procreation. The association of fertility with a male deity and the male administrators of his cult already represents a reversal of the biological correlation of fertility with female procreative powers. The women's attempt to reappropriate these powers by partaking in the rite of a dying god threatened to destabilise the established hierarchy of power in which the male priesthood, of which Ezekiel was a member, had a vantage position. By penetrating into a domain from which they had been consciously excluded, the women weeping for Tammuz violated the internal lines of Israelite cosmology, at least as Ezekiel and

his supporters understood and propagated it. The impurity resulting from it is located in two spheres: a) the natural, biological sphere, insofar as male control over fertility is invalidated by a female fertility cult, and b) the geographic sphere, since the violation takes place at a locale from which women are intentionally excluded. Not only do the women challenge YHWH's control over fertility, they challenge it on his home ground.

2.136 Interestingly, Eichrodt's reading of the passage seems to reflect the same fear of loss of control as does Ezekiel's report of the women's rite. Just as Ezekiel excluded women from the closed system of his temple ideology, Eichrodt excludes them from his closed system of analysis. In his reading, it is men who "offer the first fruits of the harvest, as they humbly recognise his [YHWH's] undeserved kindness," but that through the intervention of the women's cult, "the mystery of life and fertility, upon which Israel's earthly existence depends, is no longer dominated by the mighty controlling power of the covenant God." Thus he, like Ezekiel, propagates a system of patriarchal control, dependent on the exclusion of women from positions of power, and he, like Ezekiel, condemns the cult as improper for the true worship of god, degrading it to a mere instance of primitive magic. In other words, Eichrodt's reading of Ezekiel is, in fact, frighteningly accurate.

2.14 The fourth great obscenity (Ez. 8:16) marks the climax of defilement, as is indicated by the fact that YHWH does not remind the prophet that he will see still greater obscenities, as was the case in the previous three cases.

And he brought me into  
the inner court of the

ויבא אותי אל-חצר  
בית-יהוה הפנימית

house of YHWH, and see:  
at the entrance to the  
temple of YHWH between  
the porch and the altar,  
there were about twenty  
five men with their backs  
to the temple of YHWH  
and their faces toward the  
east, and they were  
bowing down eastward  
toward the city.

והנה-פתח היכל-יהוה  
בין האולם וכין  
המזבח כעשרים וחמשה  
איש אחריהם אל היכל  
יהוה ופניהם קדמה  
והמה משתחויתם  
קדמה לשמש:

Here, the geographic location of the scene is more important than ever before. Zimmerli (1979:243) points out that "[t]he fourth sin moves completely into the sphere of the holy." Greenberg (1983:171) further observes that the location "between the porch and the altar" (האולם וכין המזבח כין) is, according to Joel 2:17, the area "where priests pray to God on a fast day." As such, the area had a special sanctity, even within the temple. If the sanctity of the city increased toward the temple and the sanctity of the temple increased toward its central shrine, YHWH's altar, any form of cultic mispractice must consequently be of great significance, the closer it is to this centre. The actual content of the rite, which has generally been interpreted by scholars as some kind of sun-worship, is, in effect, no more offensive than that of the preceding three obscenities to which a lesser degree of impurity had been assigned. There is no reason to hypothesise that sun-worship should be a more "corrupt" form of religious practice than the veneration of vermin in Ez. 8:10-11. Thus, the true offense lies in the fact that a religious practice outside Yahwistic ideocosmology has been carried far into the sanctuary of Israel's god.

2.141 The fourth obscenity demonstrates clearly that the decisive factor in

Ezekiel's condemnation of Jerusalem is not based on an inward detachment "from that holy awe which is Yahweh's due and the foundation of all communion with him," as Eichrodt would have it (1970:128), but the external holiness of temple and city. Douglas has argued that "pollution is a type of danger which is not likely to occur except where the lines of structure, cosmic or social, are clearly defined" (Douglas 1966:113). In the case of Ez. 8, pollution has gone as far as to break down a highly structured system of purity and defilement, as understood by Ezekiel and his support group, leaving the city completely defiled with no redeeming qualities left in it. Even the sanctuary, the structural centre of Israel's ideo-cosmology, is affected by the breakdown.

2.15 With the establishment of external cultic practices at regulatory locations, the inflow of outside forces allowed for uncontrolled contact between the relatively closed system of Israel's (Ezekiel's) ideological cosmology and an unstructured array of other beliefs and practices. All the dangers inherent in transitional or liminal points are thereby unleashed. External boundaries and internal lines are broken; the system reverts to chaos and is faced with complete self-disintegration. The intrusion of external factors proceeds progressively until "they have filled the (whole) land with disorder - חמס מל או את-הארץ. Thus, the apocalypse of chs. 9-10 is but the logical conclusion of the climactic defilement presented in ch. 8. With disorder pervading the whole structure, including its very centre, collapse is inevitable.

## 2.2 Two Women, Daughters of One Mother - Ezekiel 23

2.20 Unlike ch. 8, Ez. 23 is not a unified composition. The text consists of two independent units--Ez. 23:1-27 and 23:36-49--which exhibit a number of minor differences, but which are united by thematic continuity and connected by a number of editorial interpolations. Scholars generally agree that the second unit does not come from the hand of Ezekiel, although Herrmann had argued that "nothing would contradict an Ezekielian composition of 36ff." (Herrmann 1908:24). Stylistically and thematically, Ez. 23:36-49 is in fact more closely related to the other prostitution metaphor in Ezekiel, Ez. 16. Since the latter will also be analysed in more detail below, I shall limit my discussion of Ez. 23 to the first textual unit presented here.

2.201 While Ez. 8 is stylistically very brief and concise, Ez. 23 is presented in very ornate and flowery language. Some scholars, notably Hölscher (1924:12-01), have gone as far as to identify Ez. 23:1-27 as a poetic text on the basis of its inherent rhythm and the noticeable presence of couplets and have tried to reconstruct a hypothetical song in their translation. More realistic is Zimmerli's solution to the problem of style, which is also well in accord with more recent theories regarding the definability of Hebrew poetry in general (cf. esp. Kugel 1983).

Thus we must reckon here with an exalted narrative style,  
which sometimes approximates closely a firm metric  
rhythm, but then slips back into a freer movement.

(Zimmerli 1979:481)

Stripping away for a moment the poetic ornamentation of Ez. 23:1-27, the actual plot of the story can be summarised in a few brief sentences. Two sisters, prostitutes in

Egypt, are married to a common husband (YHWH), with whom they have sons and daughters. The elder of the two sisters soon resumes her activity as a prostitute, for which she is punished by being put under the exclusive control of her former "lovers", who abuse and kill her. The younger sister follows her example, but is more promiscuous than her role model, in that she frequently changes her "lovers". Her punishment is essentially identical to that of her sister.

2.202 It is unlikely that Ezekiel had cultic prostitution in mind when he formulated his attacks against Jerusalem and Samaria. Studies by Dion (1981) and Fisher (1976) have convincingly shown that cultic prostitution was in fact less of an issue in Israel than has generally been assumed, and that it was almost certainly absent by the exilic era and thereafter. The stories are therefore not to be seen as condemnations of the practice of *τερος γαμος*, as Eichrodt (1970:334) had suggested, but are in fact purely analogical.

2.21 The first story begins with the statement that both Oholah and Oholibah were prostitutes in the land of Egypt. Thus, their profession preceded their marriage to YHWH, for it is not until vs. 4 that he declares "and they became mine" -- וַתֵּהְיֶינָה לַיהוָה. The role and status of prostitutes in the structure of ancient Israelite society is not yet sufficiently established, but Gottwald (1979:557-8) suggests that they represented a definable, social group outside the standard family system. As such, their position was one of relative independence in regard to the basic component of Israelite society. If we accept this premise, the prostitution of the two sisters does not initially denote defilement or corruption. "Although ... *zonah* certainly indicates

"prostitute" it is without any inherently pejorative connotation" (Setel 1985:89). Zimmerli has argued that the significance of Oholah's and Oholibah's prostitution lies in the fact that the women, who should have kept themselves pure for the one to whom they belonged, had lost their virginity before their marriage to YHWH (Zimmerli 1979:483). This interpretation is valid in regard to the ethical component of virginity as viewed by Judean society. Yet, in the context of Israelite society, virginity was not an exclusively ethical condition, but also related in a significant manner to patriarchal control. Setel writes:

Marriage is a property relationship; the terms usually translated as "wife" and "husband" are actually "woman" (*ishah*) and "master" (*ba'al*). There is no verb for "to marry", a man takes a woman for himself, thus transferring her possession from her father's household to his own. Virginity is not an ethical but an economic condition; women who are sexually active while in their father's household diminish their property value in a marriage transaction.

(Setel 1985:89)

2.211 Likewise, Lerner has argued that "[a]s the sexual regulation of women of the propertied class became more firmly entrenched, the virginity of respectable daughters became a financial asset for the family" (Lerner 1986:247). Yet, the family background of Oholah and Oholibah is not mentioned in the text, and the marriage between YHWH and the two sisters does not take the form of a transaction from one household to the next. It is merely implied that they enter the family system from a social position which was marginal but relatively independent in regard to the rest of society. The statement that Oholah and Oholibah were prostitutes before their marriage does not necessarily connote Samaria's and Jerusalem's inherent impurity

or "original sin". Its primary function is to set the stage for their later activities as prostitutes while being part of the central family system.<sup>8</sup>

2.212 A more significant statement is found in vs. 5, which immediately follows the mention of YHWH's marriage to Oholah and Oholibah

Oholah was a prostitute  
under me and she lusted  
for her lovers

ותזן אהלה תחת וועגב  
על-מאהביה:

With her marriage to Yahweh, Oholah had given up her sexual independence and had entered the structure of the family system, submitting her sexuality to the sole control of her husband or master (בעל). By defying his right to sexual control by continuing her activity as a prostitute, she violated the internal lines of the husband-wife relationship within the social system. Her new position as wife within the central family system was exclusive of the marginal role of a prostitute, just as her former profession as prostitute excluded her from the patriarchal family system. By continuing to enact both roles simultaneously, she had distorted the internal lines of the social system that related her to other men, either as a prostitute or as a wife. She had, so to speak, lost her definable status in society, falling between two categories. As a prostitute she had deviated from the central social norm, but the system could accommodate her in a marginal position. Her transgression now is more than a mere deviation; it is a rejection of the system as a whole. As a result,

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<sup>8</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that Ezekiel does not portray Israel's earliest history before the entry into Canaan as a time of intimacy between YHWH and his people, but as a foreboding of later obscenities. This picture is in accord with Ezekiel's synopsis of Israel's history in ch. 20, and is, as we shall see, developed further in ch. 16, but is incongruent with the rest of the Hebrew Bible. In particular Jeremiah and Hosea, who have also employed the prostitution metaphor in their historical prophecies, saw the wilderness period as a time of purity and harmony.



the system between whose categories she had fallen rejects and destroys her, but not until she had left her new "lovers", the Assyrians, for Egypt, with which she had been associated before her marriage. The punishment is then carried out by her former "lovers", the Assyrians

They exposed her  
nakedness, took her sons  
and daughters, and killed  
her with the sword; and  
she had a reputation  
among women.  
(Ez. 23:10)

המה גלו ערותה כנניה  
ובנותיה לקחו  
ואותה כחרב הרגו  
ותהי-שם לב שים:

2.22 Oholibah, representing Jerusalem, follows her sister's example:

but her lust and her  
prostitution was more  
corrupt than the  
prostitution of her sister  
(Ez. 23:11)

ותשחת עגבתה ממנה  
את-תזנותיה  
מזנוכי אחותה:

Consequently, her account is rendered more ornately and the objects of her desire are described in very picturesque language. Like her sister, she first engages in prostitution with the Assyrians, but soon turns towards the Babylonians, who appear to be the main focus of her attention, since they are featured in four verses of the text, more than any other visitor. Again, the text states that she turns from her "lovers", returning to Egypt, where she began her prostitution. Furthermore, just as Oholah's punishment did not occur until she had turned from her Assyrian visitors, her younger sister's condemnation takes place only upon her return to her first "lovers". Thus, the story of both sisters begins and ends in Egypt. "Der Kreis hat sich geschlossen, das Maß ist voll" (Fohrer 1955:134).

2.221 The accusation against Oholibah's is based essentially on the same grounds as that of her sister. The only real difference between the two accounts lies in the fact that Oholibah is said to have had more lovers. Since this difference is the only plausible explanation for Ezekiel's claim that Oholibah's prostitution was more corrupt than her sister's, we must take this factor of plurality seriously in our analysis. The central family system, which the two sisters had entered according to vs. 4 was characterised by singularity, or rather the sexual focus of one or more wives onto one singular husband.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the plurality of prostitution is in sharp contrast with the singularity of marriage, a contrast which is exacerbated by any increase in plurality. Oholibah's prostitution is more corrupt (in regard to the family system) than that of Oholah because her sexual focus is even further divided than her sister's.

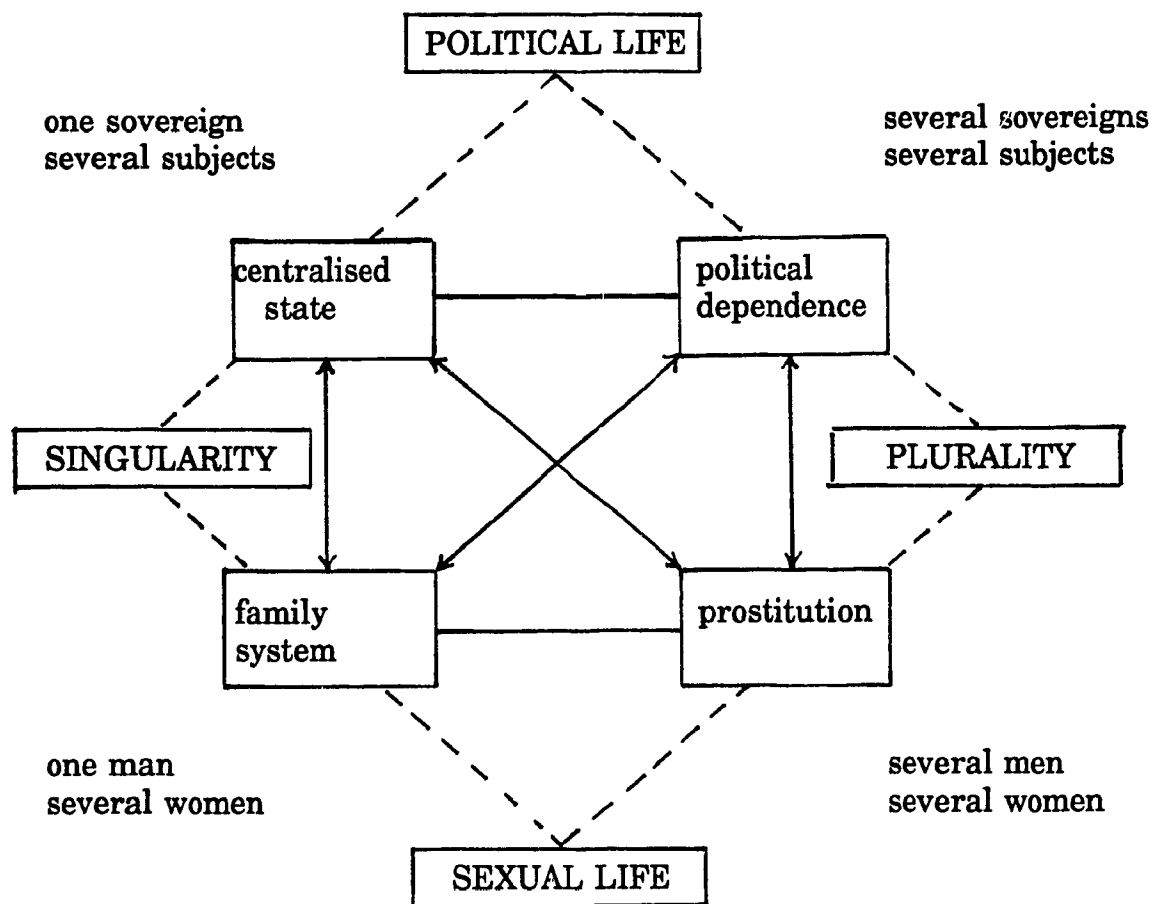
2.23 The political connotation of the metaphor is quite obvious, and exegetes have tried to correlate the sexual alliances mentioned in the text with historical political alliances between Israel and the surrounding superpowers (cf. esp. Zimmerli 1979:483-92). Applying the underlying structure of the metaphor to the political connotation of the text, we can conclude that the aim of the text is a condemnation of plurality in the realm of international relations. Just as the prostitutes of ch. 23 have fallen between the defined categories of Israel's social system and have thereby lost their social identity, the political dependence of Samaria and Jerusalem on other nations while functioning as a centralised state with a singular protective deity was

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<sup>9</sup> There are several indications in the Hebrew Bible that a man could have more than one wife, or more than one legitimate sexual partner, but no case of a woman having more than one husband is attested.

responsible for their loss of national identity. To illustrate this, we can construct a semiotic square (fig 1).

fig.1



2.231 The diagram shows the interrelationships between the structural components of the metaphor and those of its connotative message. The idea of pollution contained on the sexual level of the story is easily understood, since the dichotomy of prostitution and family life and the impossibility of merging the two categories is an integral part of Israel's social structure. On the other hand, the

binary opposition of the two categories of centralised state and political dependence contained on the connotative level of the text transcends the closed system of Israel's ideo-cosmology. The sexual metaphor transposes the political discourse onto a level that is completely contained within the ideological structure of Israelite society. Ezekiel is thus able to establish a direct correlation between political dependence and impurity.

2.24 The question remains, why did Ezekiel choose a sexual metaphor to portray Jerusalem's impurity. Theoretically, other metaphors might be equally effective, such as, Haggai's analogy of corpse-defilement (cf. Hg. 2:13-14). Frymer-Kensky points out that "sex is inherently problematic. At once cultural and physical, it defies categorisation" (Frymer-Kensky 1989:89). This being the case, sex, more than almost any other category in life, lends itself to strict regulation by law. This is confirmed by the predominance of laws regarding sexuality in the priestly legislation of the Pentateuch, especially the pre-exilic Holiness Code.

Sexuality has a place in the social order in that it bonds and creates the family. The sex laws seek to control sexual behaviour by delineating the proper parameters of sexual activity - those relationships and time in which it is permissible. (Frymer-Kensky 1989:92)

2.241 Structural boundaries (physical/cosmic or social--sexuality falls into both categories) in regard to sexuality are thus clearly defined. Consequently, pollution is more likely to occur in the realm of sexuality than in other, less well defined structures of the ideo-cosmological system. This has moved prophets like Hosea, Jeremiah and, first and foremost, Ezekiel, to employ the sexual metaphor as a

standard paradigm for pollution *per se*.

2.25 There is yet another reason why sexuality lends itself so well to metaphorical usage in regard to purity and defilement. The body, like any other structure is most vulnerable to pollution at its margins, the orifices which regulate inflow and output of the system (cf. Douglas 1966:121). Sexuality must be carefully regulated, not only because it defies categorisation due to its ambivalent nature, but also because it represents penetration into the closed structure of a body at one of its vulnerable margins. In other words, the external boundaries of the individuals involved must be taken into consideration as well as the internal lines of the social system regulating the permissiveness of sexual relations. The two aspects are inseparably intertwined. The ideal form of sexuality is located within the context of the monogamous family which is incompatible with other social expressions of sexuality, such as prostitution. Yet, even in this "proper" context, further physical limitations are involved, such as the prohibition to have sexual intercourse at the time of a woman's menstruation (cf. e.g. Lev. 15:24). In other instances, the physical limitations dominate the social norms of relationships. This is the case in homosexuality, which is condemned for males (cf. Lev. 18:22, 20:13), but apparently tolerated for women. Structurally speaking, the only difference between the two is the fact that male homosexuality involves actual penetration, while female homosexuality does not. In this case, external boundaries overshadow social regulations.

2.26 The aspect of pollution in regard to social relationships was already

discussed above. Now we can add to it the physical component of defilement, expressed through the element of plurality, on account of which Oholibah's prostitution was rated more corrupt than that of her sister. Plurality in the realm of the sexual signifies the lack of uncontrolled trafficking at a liminal (and therefore dangerous) point of the body. Unregulated entry into the structure has the potential to unleash the dangers inherent in the marginal locale. Just as Oholibah's body, which after all symbolises the city of Jerusalem, is penetrated by an uncontrolled number of outside forces, the ideological and political structure of Jerusalem is pervaded by foreign elements until the system has become alienated from itself. Judah's national identity is at the fringe of disintegration, a danger whose actualisation is described in the metaphor by Oholibah's punishment and execution. Here all her former visitors are united against her, with the addition of further nations not previously mentioned (Pekod, Shoa, Koa, Ez. 23:23). It is the same plurality of nations that was responsible for Oholibah's defilement, that now turns back on her to bring about her destruction.

2.261 Thus it is not the nations that exercise judgement over the city. Rather, the destruction of the city is brought about by Jerusalem's self-alienation, cased by political pluralism. This point is further supported by the fact that the language and imagery used to describe Oholibah's prostitution:

After the Assyrians she  
lusted, governors and  
prefects, warriors wearing  
gorgeous garments,  
horsemen riding on  
horses, all attractive

אל-בני אשור עגבה  
פחות וסגנים קרבים  
לכשי מכלול פרשים  
רכבי סוסים כחורי  
חמר כלם

young men.  
(Ez. 23:12)

is paralleled by the description of the hostile forces who come to her destruction:

the Babylonians and all  
the Chaldeans ... all the  
Assyrians with them,  
attractive young men,  
governors and prefects,  
officers and warriors, all  
of them mounted on  
horses.  
(Ez. 23:23)

בני ככל וכל-כשדים  
... כל-בני אשור אותם  
בחורי חמר פחות  
וסגנים כלם שלשים  
וקרובים רכבי סוסים  
כלם:

The same attractive, young men, mounted on horses that used to come to Oholibah for her prostitution now come to punish her. In other words, Jerusalem's destruction was already implicit in her prostitution. Jerusalem is condemned not by YHWH, but in fact by her own cultic misbehaviour.

## 2.3 And You Spread Your Legs to Anyone Passing By--Ez. 16

2.30 Chapter 16 is the longest prophecy in the book of Ezekiel. Unlike ch. 23, its style is coherent throughout and we can assume that most of the text was composed by the same author. The imagery is partly identical to that of the story of Oholah and Oholibah, but the metaphor is greatly extended in this chapter. It is important to note the first subsection of the text which presents the reader with an historical background of Jerusalem. While Ez. 23 merely stated that both Oholah and Oholibah were prostitutes in their youth, Ez. 16 gives a full account of the

prostitute's childhood from the day she was born.

2.31 After the revelation formula of Ez. 16:1-2, the prophecy relates the natural origins of Jerusalem:

Your father was an	אבִיךָ הָאֹמִרִי וְאִמְךָ
Amorite and mother a	חֲתִית
Hittite	
(Ez. 16:3)	

This rather cryptic historical reference has long disturbed scholars, since it differs radically from both the patriarchal tradition of Genesis and the Zion mythology of the Psalms. Greenberg has argued that the idea of Jerusalem's gentile ancestry serves to highlight the kindness of God who saves the abandoned infant Jerusalem from certain death (Greenberg 1983:300). His interpretation is based on a preconceived equation of pagan peoples with cruelty and unconcern which would then indeed stand in sharp contrast to God's saving act. Since there is no evidence to support this equation, it appears that Greenberg has established the correlation purely in response to what he calls "God's kindness" and not the other way round, which is much the same as shooting an arrow onto a barn door and then drawing the target around it.

2.311 Zimmerli emphasises that Jerusalem's ancestry "stems from the circle of those peoples which the land has spewed out--to use the priestly terminology (Lev. 18:24f.)--for their uncleanness" (Zimmerli 1979:338). This insight is important and well in accord with the general context of the chapter. Yet, the meaning of Ezekiel's statement can be taken one step further. Bertholet (1936:59) and Fohrer (1955:86) have pointed out that the verse should be read in the context of deuteronomic



theology which established a separating wall (*Scheidewand*) between Israel and non-Israel. Consequently, any association with the surrounding nations would imply an infringement on Israel's national purity. The verse would therefore be intended to state Jerusalem's humble origins.

2.312 I agree in part with Bertholet and Fohrer, but I would suggest that the impurity of Jerusalem's origin, according to Ezekiel, lies not so much in her genetic relationship with her pagan ancestors but in the relationship of her ancestors themselves. If Bertholet's concept of *Scheidewand* applies to Israelites and non-Israelites, it could be extended to mark separations among non-Israelites as well. Ezekiel does not merely state that Jerusalem's origins are found among non-Israelites, but he intentionally names two *distinct* nations as her parents. Thus, Jerusalem's national identity is not only disturbed by the uncontrolled infiltration of foreign peoples but is in fact based on a union which already signifies the confusion of national categories, a confusion which was intensified by the fact that the Hittites were, as Eichrodt (1970:204) pointed out, a non-Semitic people.

2.313 Pointing to Jerusalem's original impurity, by going back as far as her conception and birth, Ez. 16 differs somewhat from ch.23. In the latter, Oholibah's later obscenities were foreshadowed by her prostitution in Egypt, but her impurity originated primarily with her combining the spheres of family life and of prostitution. Thus, the prophet further develops his rather unique understanding of Israel's pre-Canaan period, which was already suggested in ch. 23, and which stands in sharp contrast to Jeremiah's or Hosea's view of the wilderness period as a time of purity

and harmony. Jerusalem has not simply become defiled by improper action or even cultic misbehaviour, which could possibly be atoned for, but is in fact thoroughly polluted. It must therefore be completely destroyed (chapter 3 of this study) and created anew (chapter 4 of this study).

2.32 Once Ezekiel has established his ideologeme of "original impurity", he develops it further.

On the day you were  
born, your navel string  
was not cut and you were  
not bathed in water to be  
cleansed, you were not  
rubbed with salt and you  
were not wrapped up.  
(Ez. 16:4)

ומולדותיך ביום הולדת  
אתך לא-כרת שרך  
ובמים לא-רחצת למשי  
וחמלח לא המלחת  
והחתל לא חתלת:

According to the priestly laws of Leviticus, childbirth was directly associated with impurity and danger. A woman giving birth to a son was unclean for seven days, if she gave birth to a daughter, she was unclean for two weeks. After the period of impurity, she had to perform specified purification rituals and make an offer of atonement (cf. Lev. 12). Unfortunately, no evidence is given as to how the child itself ought to be treated and purified. However, Ezekiel's mention of certain actions that were specifically not undertaken on the day of Jerusalem's birth suggests that rituals for the purification on newborns did exist in ancient Israel.

2.321 The reference to water, the paradigmatic agent of purification is self-explanatory. The presence of salt is a little more obscure. Fohrer (1955:86), following Bertholet as usual, suggests that the custom of rubbing a newborn child with salt was intended to ward off evil spirits and is in fact still practised today in the Near East.

Yet, there is too little evidence that would allow us to make any definite claims about the function of salt in the treatment of newborns.

2.322 The uncut navel string, on the other hand, is a meaningful signifier of impurity. As I have pointed out earlier, childbirth in ancient Israel was regarded as a dangerous and polluting act. As is the case with any rite of passage, by which an individual passes from one socially defined status into another, the liminal phase by which the foetus passes into the society of living human beings contains and emanates danger. To control this danger, every rite of passage contains a number of rituals, which generally follow one basic pattern.

The danger is controlled by ritual which precisely separates him from his old status, segregates him for a while and then declares his entry to his new status.

(Douglas 1966:96)

However, in the case of the abandoned infant of Ez. 16, the navel string was uncut, the liminal phase was never completed, and entry to the new status could therefore never be fully actualised. The infant was never completely separated from her foetal state, thus remaining in the dangerous and impure liminal phase through which she should have passed.

2.33 The rest of the first subsection describes the intervention of YHWH who commands the foundling to live, the growth of the girl to sexual maturity, and her subsequent marriage to YHWH. It concludes with an account of her wealth and beauty, both of which were acquired through her relationship to YHWH. Gunkel (1921:113-6) has pointed out that the story of the foundling child, rescued from certain death and raised to possess beauty and wealth, is a well known fairy tale

motif and that Ezekiel has likely taken up a popular folk story to incorporate it into his prophecy against Jerusalem. Much is to be said for Gunkel's suggestion, since the motif of the unlikely hero does indeed appear a universal function in folkloric thought (cf. Thompson 1957:8-16; function *unpromising hero/heroine* L400-L499). However, in the larger context of the text, a prophecy of doom, not of hope, the protagonist is not so much an unlikely hero as a very likely villain. Soon the imagery of wealth and beauty is abandoned and replaced by accounts of illicit sexuality and defilement. By linking the two sets of images, Ezekiel transformed the heroic character of the folktale into a character whose initial weakness and impurity foreshadows her later obscenities. He had, so to speak, turned the tale on its head, using the acquisition of wealth and beauty only as a pivotal point through which the protagonist passes to return to her initial state of impurity.

2.34 The central accusation in the second subsection of the text refers to illicit worship on high places. Its concern is therefore primarily cultic, not political as has been the case in Ez. 23.

You built yourself a mound and made yourself a high place at every square. (Ez. 16:24)	ותבני-לך גב ותעשי-לך רמה ככל-רחוב:
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During Josiah's reforms, cultic worship in Judah became centralised (cf. 2 Kg. 22-3). The high places found throughout the country were broken down, and worship was limited to the nuclear shrine at Jerusalem, administered by a unified priesthood. This was the religio-ideological context of Ezekiel's world view. Being a member of the recently centralised priesthood, he could not tolerate the existence of high places

that diffused the cult of YHWH, drawing power from the nuclear temple system. Whether or not these high places actually existed at every square shortly before and during the exile (scholars generally reject the idea) is not of great relevance here. It is important that Ezekiel posits the reality of cultic practices outside Jerusalem as a polemic component in his rhetoric against the city.

2.341 Having stated his accusation in fairly direct terms, Ezekiel resumes the language of analogy.

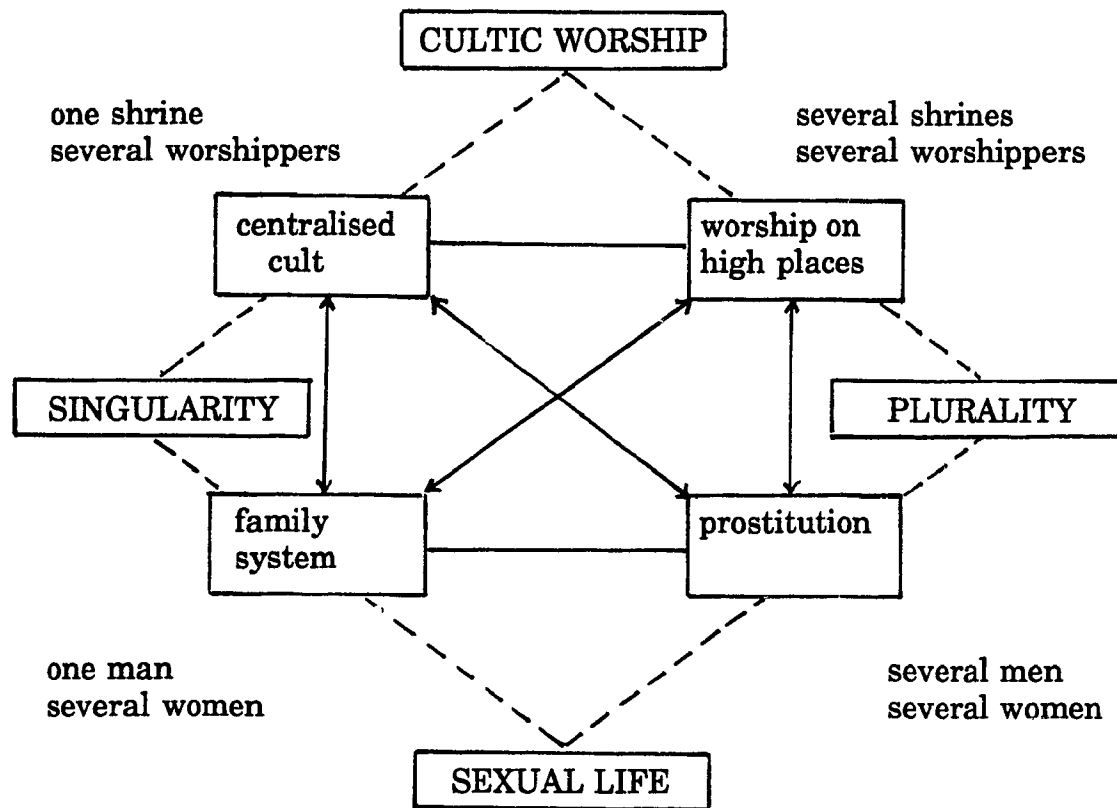
At the head of every road  
you built your high places  
and you were obscene on  
account of your beauty,  
and you spread your legs  
to anyone who passed by,  
and you increased your  
activity as a prostitute.  
(Ez. 16:25)

אל-כל-ראש דרך בנית  
כמתך ותתעבי את-יפיד  
ותפשקי את-רגליך  
לכל-עובר וחרבי  
את-תונחיד:

Just as Judah's cultic worship, in Ezekiel's polemic, was not limited to one central shrine, as should have been the case after Josiah's reforms, but was diffused over the country (every square, the head of every road), so the prostitute's sexuality was not limited to one man, as should have been the case after her marriage to YHWH, but "she spread her legs to anyone who passed by." It follows a list of her "lovers", exemplifying the plurality of her sexuality, comparable to the list in Ez. 23, albeit less colourful in its description.

2.35 The sexual metaphor, used to denote political dependence in ch. 23, has now become an expression of cultic plurality. To illustrate the new ideologeme, we can construct another semiotic square:

fig.2



While the sexual metaphor in Ez. 23 gave expression to the breakdown of external boundaries through the uncontrolled penetration of outside forces into the political structure of Jerusalem, Ez. 16 signifies the diffusion of internal lines regarding the religious structure that upholds the system.

2.36 To intensify his ideologeme, Ezekiel adds one further element to his analogy. I have already argued that the family system and prostitution were incompatible structures, the combination of which left Jerusalem in a liminal position, i.e. impure. In ch. 16, Ezekiel posits that even as a prostitute, Jerusalem's relationship to her visitors was highly anomalous.

Gifts are given to all  
prostitutes, but you gave  
your gifts to all your  
lovers, bribing them to  
come to you from all sides  
for your prostitution.  
(Ez. 16:33)

לכל-זנות יתנו נדָה  
ואת נתת את-נדָנִיךָ  
לכל-מֵאֵהֶבֶיךָ וְתִשְׁחָדִי  
אוֹתָם לְבוֹא אֵלֶיךָ  
מִסָּבִיב כְּתִזְנוּתֶיךָ:

Not only has she violated the social lines of the family system by retaining her practice as a prostitute, she also violated the social lines that connect a prostitute to her visitors, reversing the relationship by giving out money rather than taking it. This violation represents the ultimate perversion of social relationships and adds to the disintegration of Jerusalem's social structure. The structure is dissolved; breakdown must follow. Doom and destruction are imminent, the description of which takes up the rest of the chapter, as was the case in the previous two texts.

2.4 Looking at the three texts analyzed in this chapter, we see three distinct elements that constitute the defilement of Jerusalem in Ezekiel's ideology: a) the disintegration of structural boundaries; b) political and cultic plurality; and c) the breakdown of social relationships. The first of these, the disintegration of boundary structures, is expressed most directly in Ez. 8, where defilement originates in the interplay of space and action. The cultic performances described by the prophet are not impure themselves but are considered defiling only insofar as they relate to the physical cult of YHWH as Israel's national religion. Thus each of the cultic obscenities of ch. 8 are located at structurally vulnerable points, such as gateways, and increase in significance toward the central shrine of YHWH. The final obscenity

(Ez. 8:16) shows that Israel's religious system in Jerusalem is completely pervaded by outside elements. Even the most sacred core of the temple is violated by the presence of sun worshippers in the space between the altar and the porch and is therefore no longer "set apart."

2.41 In chs. 16 and 23 the element of boundary breakdown is implied in the sexual metaphor. Yet, the crux of the parables is not exclusively contained in the theme of sexual activity but in the penetration of a plurality of outside elements into the political and again the cultic structure of the city. Jerusalem's national and political orientation has become diffused on account of a number of political alliances with different nations. This accusation is intensified by the third element in Ezekiel's rhetoric, the breakdown or perversion of social relationships. Thus, the plurality of Jerusalem's "prostitution" is coupled with the mixing of improper social categories, such as the role of the wife and the role of the prostitute. Particularly offensive is the fact that the prostitute of ch. 16 pays hire to her customers, rather than *vice versa*. Here the relationship is not only distorted but in fact completely reversed.

2.42 These three themes all point to a loss of identity. Jerusalem's religious system has become infiltrated by foreign elements as was described in ch. 8 and ch. 16. Furthermore, the city's political system has become diffused and the social relationships within it have become perverted as depicted in chs. 16 and 23. The city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants can therefore no longer be considered to be truly Israelite. External boundaries and internal lines are broken; the system reverts to chaos and is faced with complete self-disintegration. The numerous apocalyptic



prophecies against the city are therefore but the logical conclusion of Ezekiel's accusations of defilement.

### ***3.0 Apocalypse Now! - The Purification***

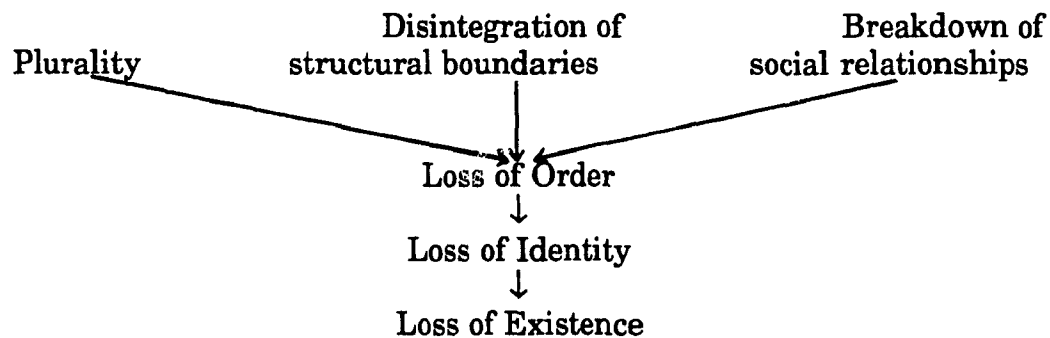
3.01 Ezekiel's attacks against the city of Jerusalem which constitute most of the book's first major section (Ez. 4-23) are pervaded by visions of destruction. The symbolism employed to signify this destruction is multifaceted including: the eastern wind which causes the fruit of the vine of Israel to dry up (Ez. 19); a crucible containing base metals (Ez. 22) and a rusty pot (Ez. 24), both of which are emptied of their contents; the former lovers of "Jerusalem the harlot" (Ez. 16, 23); and the less allegorical sword of Chaldea (Ez. 21).

3.02 The semiotic value of these visions is somewhat lower than that contained in Ezekiel's accusations of impurity. In most cases, the destruction is presented as nothing more than the natural consequence of impurity, i.e. the final collapse of national boundaries and social structures in Jerusalem. Thus, in the three chapters discussed above, the destruction is not so much an unexpected turn of events, but rather the end of a long development which, according to Ezekiel, goes back as far as Israel's Egyptian prehistory. I have noted earlier that Ezekiel's understanding of the Egyptian experience, as a time of impurity rather than innocence, is unique in the Hebrew Bible. Likewise, his interpretation of the city's destruction not as a sudden withdrawal of divine protection but as the closure of a climactic accumulation of self-destructive practice, is typical of Ezekiel, inseparable from his ideology of purity and defilement. This is particularly obvious in the case of the two prostitution metaphors, where it is not YHWH himself who exercises judgement over the women but in fact

their former clients. The very plurality that constituted Samaria's and Judah's impurity brought about their destruction.

3.03 Ezekiel combines the ideological functions of plurality, disintegration of structural boundaries and the breakdown of social relationships noted in the previous chapter to produce a singular line of consequential development.

fig. 3



Loss of order is the overriding theme that characterises the state of impurity in Ezekiel's ideology. Consequently, the social and national structures that characterise Israel, according to Ezekiel, are reduced to an undifferentiated chaos in Jerusalem. In other words, Jerusalem and its inhabitants can no longer be identified as belonging to Israel; they have lost their identity. Before proceeding to the last step in this development, the loss of existence (i.e. destruction), it is once again important to call to mind the discourse of destruction in the book of Ezekiel is by no means bilateral but moves solely in the direction of Jerusalem. Likewise, the system of purity by which the city is judged is not necessarily shared by both Israelite communities, but is, as far as we can know, endorsed only by Ezekiel and the *golah*.

Thus, the prophet is applying an ideological system to a community that does not necessarily share in this system. In fact, the accusations are based precisely on Jerusalem's non-participation in Ezekiel's ideology.

3.04 However, as the explicit discourse of judgement is completely unilateral, the implicit discourse of ideology and identity is in fact bilateral. The rhetoric of purity and defilement invalidates the identity of the Jerusalemite remnant; it also serves to establish and validate the identity of Ezekiel's exilic support group. Thus, the structure of Ezekiel's system of purity must be seen as the ideological superstructure of the prophet's own community which thereby defines itself as the true and pure Israel. In contrast, the social infrastructure of the Jerusalemite remnant is said to be incongruent with the ideological superstructure posited and affirmed by the prophet and his associates. The Jerusalemites lie outside the boundaries of identity that define the true Israel and are thus, in effect, non-existent as far as the remnant of Israel is concerned. There is no Israel aside from the exiles.

### *3.1 Metallurgy and Cuisine-Art: Ez. 22:17-22 & Ez. 24:1-14*

3.101 Semiotically interesting for an analysis of oracles of doom are the metaphor of the crucible in Ez. 22: 17-22 and the analogy of the rusty pot in Ez. 24:1-14. Both passages feature the image of a pot or a similar object that is placed on hot coals, so that either its contents or even the vessel itself may be consumed. The

image of the pot appears once more in the book of Ezekiel (Ez. 11:3, 11), where it signifies the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants who regard themselves as choice pieces of meat in a cauldron.

3.11 Scholarly opinion in regard to the meaning of the crucible metaphor is essentially unified. Ezekiel takes up an old analogy of Isaiah (Is. 1:22, 25) and develops it further (as he had done with the prostitution metaphor of Hosea). Whereas Isaiah's metaphor presents a positive picture, in which the smelting process would eventually yield the desired end product - choice silver, Ezekiel's treatment of the theme contains no such hope. His crucible contains nothing but dross, incapable of being refined.<sup>10</sup>

3.12 Characteristic of this reading is the exclusive focus on the end product of the smelting process described in the metaphor which ignores the process itself. The most extreme example here is Zimmerli (1979:463), who goes as far as to give the chemical formula of the crucible's yield - PbO (lead oxide). He then goes on to establish the relationship between the undesired yield and the ideal end-product. Noting that the smelting process is described twice within this short passage, he points out that in vs. 18, which links the analogy to the city of Jerusalem, silver is not listed among the metals contained in the crucible while it is mentioned in vs. 20, which accounts for the standard procedure in the refinement of silver. He concludes that the purification of Jerusalem is as impossible as the refinement of silver without the presence of silver.

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<sup>10</sup> The only alternative reading is given by Bertholet (1936:81), who argues that the smelting process signifies the siege of Jerusalem without, however, stating how or why.

3.121 Zimmerli's observation is really nothing more than a restatement of the text. Naturally the prophet describes what is and what should be, and, as in any oracle of doom, the two descriptions are incongruent. But is the absence of silver really the only significant element in the text? Ezekiel speaks not only of the presence and absence of silver, but, also lists a considerable number of other metals used for the smelting.

Human being: The house  
of Israel is dross to me,  
all copper, tin, iron, and  
lead in the midst of the  
crucible, it is silver dross.  
(Ez. 22:18)

בן-אדם הוּ-לִי  
כֵּת-יִשְׂרָאֵל לְסָגִים  
כֹּלם נְחֹשֶׁת וְכֶדֶיִל  
וְכֶרְזֶל וְעוֹפֶרֶת בְּחֹךְ  
כֹּר סָגִים כֶּסֶף הוּ:

\*MT: לְסוֹג [Q: לְסִיג]; other  
occurrences of the term are  
always plural (cf. Is. 1:22, 25;  
Ez. 22:18b, 19a; Ps. 119:119;  
Prv. 25:4, 26:23).

Thus the content of the crucible, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, are signified by a plurality of metals. This signification is intensified by Ezekiel's use of a plural verb to refer to the subject of the sentence (וְהֵיוּ--literally, "the house of Israel are"). Since the element of plurality has had a significant ideological function elsewhere in the text (cf. *supra*), we ought to pay close attention to it here as well. Once again, Ezekiel points to the diffusion of Jerusalemite national identity which is at the root of the city's impurity and the source of its destruction. Just as Jerusalem's lovers in Ez. 16 and 23 signified a plurality of political and cultic forces that brought about the disintegration of the city's centralised religio-political structure, so the array of metals in the crucible symbolises the lack of cohesiveness and the decentralisation

of Jerusalemite society.<sup>11</sup>

3.13 What then does the smelting process signify? Ideally, the metals listed above were added to unrefined silver to absorb its sulphuric elements, leaving refined silver and worthless silver dross after the smelting. This process is described in vs. 20, where silver is mentioned first in a list of metals.

As one gathers silver,  
copper, iron, lead and tin  
in a crucible to stoke a  
fire under it in order to  
smelt it, so ...  
(Ez. 22:20a)

בַּקִּבְצָתִי כֶסֶף וְנְחָשֶׁת  
וּבְרִזְלִי וְעוֹפֶרֶת וּבְרִיזְלִי  
אֶל-תּוֹךְ כּוֹר לַפַּחַת-עָלָיו  
אֲשֶׁר לִהְיוֹתִי בָּן ...

<sup>b</sup>MT: קִבְצָתִי; כֶּ is required by the  
particle בָּן introducing second  
clause of the sentence; cf. LXX,  
Pesh., Targ.

In contrast, the silver is absent in vs. 18, as Zimmerli has observed. What is left is only the impure mixture of base metals--the silver dross.<sup>12</sup> Still, the mixture is heated and smelted, in an apparently useless effort. To determine the significance of this action, we must look at the purpose Ezekiel assigns to the smelting process.

... so I shall gather (you)  
in my wrath and in my  
anger, and I shall put you  
in and I shall smelt you.  
And I shall bring you  
together and I shall

... בֶּן אֶקְבֹּץ בְּאִפִּי  
וּבְחַמְמִי וְהִנַּחְתִּי  
וְהִתַּכְתִּי אֹתְכֶם: וּכְנַסְתִּי  
אֹתְכֶם וּנְפַחְתִּי עָלֵיכֶם  
כְּאֲשֶׁר עֲבַרְתִּי וְנִתְכַּחְתֶּם  
בְּתוֹכָהּ: כְּהִתּוֹךְ כֶּסֶף

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<sup>11</sup> Noteworthy is also Kelso's note that Ezekiel's term for corrosion is חֲלָאָה, which literary means disease, and which has a related usage in the word "leprosy" (Kelso 1945:392). Lepers are described as highly impure in the Hebrew Bible, likely because their decaying bodies were between the clearly demarcated categories of life and death. In any case, leprosy defied the Hebrew classification system. The linguistic parallel observed by Kelso may therefore indicate that Ezekiel's cauldron offends the order of purity in the same way (and thus with the same force) as the disease of leprosy.

<sup>12</sup> That חֲסִי in vs. 18 must be read as subordinate to חֲסִי, rather than independently is indicated by the fact that the latter cannot be linked to כּוֹר. This is supported by Masoretic accentuation, as well as LXX, Pesh., and Targ.

kindle the fire of my fury  
upon you and you will be  
smelted in it. As silver is  
smelted inside the  
crucible, so you shall be  
smelted in it, and you will  
know that I am YHWH, I  
have poured out my wrath  
over you.  
(Ez. 22:20b-22)

בתוך כור כן תתכו  
כתובה וידעתם כי-אני  
יהוה שפכתי חמתי  
עליכם:

Ez. 20-22 demonstrates quite clearly that the heating of the crucible in Ez. 22 was never intended to refine or purify its contents, as had been the case with Isaiah's use of the metaphor. The focus is clearly on destruction. The language of anger, wrath, and fury, without the possibility of a "happy ending" indicates that a positive outcome was never intended.

3.131 The plurality of elements in the crucible, signifying the diffusion and disintegration of Jerusalemite society, is too great to be returned to its homogenous consistency. Only eradication, not refinement, can be the consequence of the city's defilement. But should the small remnant of "faithful" Israelites also be destroyed in the disastrous aftermath of the city's defilement? If we see the plurality of metals in the crucible as a signifier for the Jerusalemite chaos, we may assume that the choice silver, although absent in the text's direct reference to the city (Ez. 22:18) but present in the general description of the smelting process (Ez. 22:20a), represents the true remnant of Israel. I would therefore conclude that the silver in Ezekiel's parable indeed signifies the exiles who are in fact absent from the city of Jerusalem during its destruction by Babylonian forces, just as the silver is absent in Ezekiel's meltdown of the cauldron.



3.14 What we see here is a positive interpretation of the exile, not as penance but as protection. Contrary to the views of Hezekiah's Jerusalemites, the deportation of Jehoiakin's *golah* was not a punishment ordained by YHWH but an attempt to preserve that which is still truly Israelite from corruption and destruction. Furthermore, it is not the *golah* that has evoked YHWH's wrath, but the Jerusalemite group, and they alone will bear the punishment. The city is to be reduced to a heap of ruins, like base metals which are smelted in a crucible, and its inhabitants are eradicated like silver dross, which is discarded after the smelting process. The house of Israel, a designation which Ezekiel seems to apply indiscriminately to the *golah* as well as the Jerusalemite remnant, is purged of its impurity, only its true and pure heirs remain, waiting in exile for their return.

3.15 The image of the rusty cauldron in Ez. 24:1-14 appears to present a similar picture. Although the symbolic context moves from metallurgy to cuisine-art, a number of themes in the parable (לשן) serve to establish continuity between the two oracles. Most notable here are the elements of fire (שן) and YHWH's wrath (המלח). Again, scholars are more or less unanimous in their interpretation: The pot and the pieces of meat in it represent the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants, whose impurity, symbolised by rust, has become so great that it can no longer be cleansed (cf. Ez. 24:13), so much so that the pot itself must be melted (i.e. destroyed).

3.151 Surprisingly, some exegetes add that the oracle contains a message of morality and judgement, thereby taking the parable far beyond its explicit and implicit (symbolic) content of purgation and destruction into a realm that Christian

theologians have always wanted to associate with "true prophecy", viz. the realm of ethics. Fohrer (1955:140) concludes that Ezekiel's parable posits "a strict and unsparing judgement, in which only the deeds and actions will be tried, just and without bias" (*ein strenges und schonungsloses Gericht, in dem unparteiisch und gerecht nur die Taten und das Verhalten geprüft werden*). His reading is surprising in light of the prophet's strong words, which do not speak about judgement and trial, but about indiscriminating destruction.

Maliciousness was in your  
impurity, because I  
cleansed you, but you  
were not clean from your  
impurity; you shall not be  
clean until I have  
satisfied my anger over  
you. (Ez. 24:13)

בטמאתך זמה יען  
טהרתך ולא טהרת  
מטמאתך לא תטהרי-עוד  
עד הנכיחי את-חמתי כך:

Similarly, Zimmerli (1979:501) argues that "God's judgement, which leaves no island of escape on which the old can be preserved" does indeed contain hope for the people "where it submits to the fact of such judgement which takes away all human pride." If we brush aside for a moment the Protestant context of the two readings and focus instead on the textual evidence presented by vs. 13, we see that the parable contains no such hope for Jerusalem, that punishment is ordained and that destruction cannot be averted.

3.16 Yet another element seems to have been ignored by exegetes in their interpretation of the parable of the pot, namely the significance of the meat which was removed from the pot before the cauldron was set on the fire. Although Zimmerli (1979:499) had pointed out that it is noteworthy that the lighting of fire is not

mentioned until the meat had been removed from the cauldron, he does not elaborate on his observation. A perhaps more fruitful suggestion was put forth by Bertholet (1936:87) who proposed that the content removed from the cauldron could possibly signify the *golah* in Babylon that was removed from Jerusalem before the destruction of the city. Unfortunately, he immediately rejects this idea, arguing that the emptying of the pot was required so as to enable it to melt. While this observation is valid, it in no way precludes an interpretation of the meat as the exilic community.

3.161 We may get a better insight into the meaning of the pieces of meat in the pot by looking at the other occurrence of the cauldron image in the book of Ezekiel (Ez. 11:1ff). The text states that the administrators of Jerusalem (שָׂרֵי הָעָם) regard themselves as the pieces of meat in a cauldron.

<p>They are saying ... it is a pot, and we are the meat. (Ez. 11:3)</p>	<p>הָאֹמְרִים ... הֵיאָ הַסִּיר וְאֵנַחֲנוּ הַבָּשָׂר:</p>
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Their self-estimate as choice morsels is, however, clearly negated by the prophet.

<p>It shall not be a pot for you, and you shall not be the meat in it. (Ez. 11:11a)</p>	<p>הֵיאָ לֹא-תִהְיֶה לָכֶם לִסִּיר וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיֶה בְּתוֹכָהּ לַבָּשָׂר:</p>
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The last quotation seems to indicate that the meat in the pot does not signify the Jerusalemite community, or at least their representative leaders (שָׂרֵי הָעָם), and if we regard Ez. 24:1-14 as an elaboration on the underdeveloped theme of the pot in Ez. 11, we may hypothesise that the same indication applies to the parable.

3.162 This brings up the question: if the Jerusalemites are not the choice pieces

of meat in the pot, then who is being signified by this image? In the parable of the crucible, silver, the desired end-product, signified the *golah*. By means of comparison and implication we may conclude that the meat in the pot in Ez. 24:1-14 also stands for Ezekiel's exilic community. Ezekiel's positive description of the "ingredients" is therefore not to be seen as a note of sarcasm, but as a positive description of his fellow exiles.

Gather pieces of meat in  
it, every good piece, fill it  
with leg and shoulder, the  
choicest of bones. (Ez.  
24:4)

אסף נתחים אליה  
כל-נתח טוב ירך וכתף  
מבחר עצמים מלא:

״MT נתחיה, cf. LXX, Pesh.

Now Zimmerli's observation that the lighting of fire is not mentioned until the cauldron is emptied of its contents becomes more intelligible.<sup>13</sup> The destruction of the pot and its rusty content takes place only after the choice pieces of meat, the true heirs of Jerusalem, have been removed. In other words, the pure remnant of Israel is relocated before the annihilation of the city and its inhabitants. True, YHWH gives the command to boil or seethe the meat and bones in the cauldron, but the Hebrew terms used to express these imperatives have no inherent negative connotation (vs. 5, רתח = boil, make seethe; כשל = boil, seethe ripen; vs. 10, תמם *hiphl* = complete, finish, perfect, cause to cease). The action performed on the meat in the cauldron is

<sup>13</sup> Ez. 24:10b contains the phrase והעצמות יחרו "that the bones may be burnt." The clause is, however, in grammatical contradiction with the rest of the text, due to its unexpected shift to the imperfect, and, more importantly, because of the feminine plural עצמות, used by Ezekiel to designate dead bones (Ez. 6:5, 32:27, 37:1, 3-5, 7, 11). The pieces of meat and bone in Ez. 24:1-14 are otherwise referred to as עצמי (cf. Zimmerli 1979:495). This incongruence suggests that the phrase is a later addition by an editor, who understood the bones not as choice morsels, but as pieces to be burnt and destroyed. The fact that the phrase is also absent from LXX suggests that it is not original to the text.

not unusual, but merely signifies what one usually does with choice pieces of meat in a pot. Clearly, meat is not cooked in order to be destroyed, but in order to be brought into conformity with the dietary habits of a culture that prefers cooked meat over raw meat for human consumption. What is unusual, however, is the treatment of the pot after it has been emptied.

And place it empty upon  
its coals that it may glow  
and the copper may burn  
and the uncleanness  
within it be dissolved and  
its rust be brought to an  
end. (Ez. 24:11)

והעמידה על-גחליה רקח  
למען תחם וחרה נחשתה  
ונתכה כתוכה טמאתה  
תתם חלאתא:

3.17 It is here that the imagery of destruction is introduced. The heating of the pot is no longer cuisine-art, but is aimed at the full annihilation of the cauldron and its uncleanable rust. The choice pieces of meat had to be taken from the vessel, so as to be removed from the rust of impurity. Once this is achieved the only possible way to sweep away the defilement that is left is to destroy it along with its container. As with the crucible, that which is good and pure is brought to a place where it is untainted by the impurity of its place of origin, while the remainder is burnt and discarded. The judgement pronounced over Jerusalem and its inhabitants is final. The city, signified by the rusty pot, it is completely destroyed, only the *golah* is spared, being geographically removed from the centre of impurity, awaiting their return to the now purified land.

### 3.2 Your Eye Shall Not Spare and You Shall Have No Pity - Ez. 9-11

3.20 Certainly the most elaborate and graphic account of destruction in the book is found in the great apocalyptic vision of Ez. 8-11. Chapter 8 has already been discussed above and will not be treated again here. Likewise, the theophany in Ez. 10 is of no great relevance for my analysis. For the purpose of this study, the destruction of the city (Ez. 9), the scattering of burning coals over Jerusalem (Ez. 10:2) and YHWH's abandonment of temple and city (Ez. 10:18-19, 11:22-25) will be of greatest importance.

3.21 After the prophet's vision of Jerusalem's cultic impurities in ch. 8 (cf. *supra*), catastrophic events appear imminent. Thus, chapter 9 begins with YHWH's announcement that the punishment of the city (פְּקֻדַּת הָעִיר) has come near. Immediately, seven men appear. One of them is clothed in linen and carrying a scribe's instrument; the others are wielding tools of destruction (כְּלֵי מַחֲצוֹל; Ez. 9:2). It is significant that the seven executioners enter the city from the north,<sup>14</sup> via the same gate through which the prophet himself had entered Jerusalem at the beginning of the vision (שַׁעַר ... אֲשֶׁר מִפְּנֵה צִפּוֹנָה) "the gate which faces north; Ez. 9:2, cf. 8:3). This observation is significant insofar as it posits a certain north-south axis along which both defilement and destruction proceed. This seems to underline the close connection between defilement and destruction discussed earlier, the latter being the natural consequence of the former, rather than a new, divinely ordained development.

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<sup>14</sup> cf. Jeremiah's "foe from the north."

Yet, the north-south axis also presents an important contrast to an east-west axis, which dominates Ezekiel's vision of the new Jerusalem (Ez. 40-48; cf. Zimmerli 1979:416), and which is characterised by purity and re-creation.

3.22 The seven executioners are instructed to go through the city and strike (הִכּוּ; Ez. 9:4). Before doing so, however, a somewhat surprising command is given to the man in linen, namely to mark all those opposed to the obscenities committed in the city with his writing tool.

And YHWH said to him:  
"Pass through the city,  
through Jerusalem and  
mark a sign on the  
foreheads of the men who  
moan and groan over all  
the obscenities committed  
in it!" (Ez. 9:4)

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי  
עֲבֹר בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר בְּחֹךְ  
יְרוּשָׁלַם וְהִתִּיֵּית תוֹ  
עַל-מִצְחוֹת הָאֲנָשִׁים  
וְהָנֹאֲקִים עַל  
כָּל-הַכּוֹעֲבוֹת הַנַּעֲשׂוֹת  
בְּתוֹכָהּ:

<sup>d</sup> אלו K

These specially marked men are then said to be exempt from the large scale execution.

But you shall not  
approach any man who  
has the mark on him.  
(Ez. 9:6aβ)

וְעַל-כָּל-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-עָלִיו  
הָתוּ אֶל-תִּגְשׁוּ

3.221 The command is surprising since the prophet has never mentioned anyone protesting against cultic impurity of the city. On the contrary, the entire preceding chapter of cultic impurities states that the city is thoroughly defiled, that national boundaries and social relations have become disintegrated, and that the impurity of the city encompasses all sectors of society, including the administrative and the temple system. Furthermore, I have tried to show that the cultic obscenities

of ch. 8 are not based on a system of personal ethics, but rather on the violation of an ideological structure. Consequently, any exemption from destruction on the basis of personal ethics would contradict the very ideology of Ezekiel's rhetoric of purity and defilement. The command is also incongruent with other prophecies of doom, where destruction was presented as complete and unqualifying. Finally, the instruction itself that is given to the group of executioners is rigorous and all-inclusive.

Elders and young men,  
young women and  
children as well as women  
you shall kill to destroy  
(Ez. 9:6aα)

זקן כחור וכתולה וטף  
ונשים תהרגו למשחית

3.222 Little help has been offered by exegetes. Fohrer (1955:54) merely points out that in spite of other textual evidence in the book, Ezekiel still supposes that there must be some faithful YHWH worshippers left in the city. Eichrodt (1970:131-2) once more solves the problem by superimposing a Protestant ideology, suggesting that the sign of faithfulness amidst a number of unqualified condemnations marks the element of individual responsibility vs. collective retribution and is but another sign of God's great salvific purpose. Other scholars have simply ignored the textual tension, focusing instead on the shape of the mark or the Babylonian motif of the scribe-angel in relation to Ezekiel's man clothed in linen. The implication of their silence is an acceptance of the general theory that the city is destroyed while a select few Jerusalemites are spared from execution.

3.223 One possibility of interpretation has been left out so far. Could it be that



the scribe instructed to mark the pure in Jerusalem returns without having found anyone who was not defiled? No one would receive the mark and consequently *all* inhabitants of the city would be slain: the old and the young man, the young woman and the child. Ezekiel's statement that he was left alone (וְאֵין אִתִּי) as the executioners went to work might point to such a reading, but no firm conclusion can be formed on the basis of this statement.<sup>15</sup> More convincing, however, is YHWH's second command to the linen clothed man, to fill his hands with burning coals and scatter them over the city (Ez. 10:2), which seems to represent the final annihilation of Jerusalem. Not only are its inhabitants killed, its houses are also burnt, as would be any possible survivors of the execution. This total eradication would reduce YHWH's previous exemption to absurdity. The text would be more congruent if we posit that the man clothed in linen did not make his mark on anyone in the city, since there was no one who could qualify for it. The complete destruction of Jerusalem and all its inhabitants is therefore the logical conclusion to the city's complete and all pervading impurity.<sup>16</sup>

3.23 Perhaps even more surprising than the mark of exception is the prophet's lament.

Ah, [lord] YHWH, will you  
destroy all that is left of

אהה [אדני] יהוה  
המשחית אתה את

---

<sup>15</sup> The phrase is also missing in LXX and may be a later addition.

<sup>16</sup> The fact that Ezekiel encounters a rather strange cabal of 25 men does not take away from the finality of the judgement. The men, who are said to advise the city with evil counsel (עצת רע), would certainly not have been included among the group to be marked with the sign of faithfulness. The men are functional actants required for the prophetic oracle rather than indicators that the city is still inhabited.

Israel as you pour out כַּל-שְׂאֵרֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּשֶׁפָּכַךְ  
 your wrath over אֶת חֲמַתְךָ עַל-יְרוּשָׁלַם:  
 Jerusalem? (Ez. 9:8)

<sup>e</sup>Lacking in LXX.

The brief lament has univocally been interpreted as an intercession of the prophet on behalf of Jerusalem. However, it appears odd that Ezekiel, whose rhetoric against the city was anything but sympathetic, would now attempt to prevent that which he had been prophesying all along. In any case, YHWH is not moved and gives a somewhat cryptic and not altogether cogent answer, which indicates, however, that his command is final.

<p>And he said to me: "The          guilt of the house of Israel          and Judah is exceedingly          great, the land is full of          blood and the city full of          injustice for they say:          'YHWH has left the land          and YHWH does not see.'          Therefore my eye will not          spare and I shall have no          pity; their own ways I          have brought upon their          heads."          (Ez. 9:9-10)</p>	<p>וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי          עוֹן בֵּית-יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהוּדָה          גָּדוֹל כְּמֹאד מְאֹד וְחַמְלָא          הָאָרֶץ דָּמִים וְהָעִיר          מְלֵאָה מָטָה כִּי אָמְרוּ          עֲזַב יְהוָה אֶת-הָאָרֶץ          וְאֵין יְהוָה רֹאֶה:          וְגַם-אֲנִי לֹא-תַחֲסוּס עֵינַי          וְלֹא אֲחַמֵּל וּרְכָם כְּרָאשָׁם          בְּתַתִּי:</p>
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3.231 It is important to clarify who is being referred to as the remnant of Israel (שְׂאֵרֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל) by Ezekiel, and for whom the prophet is interceding. Must we necessarily suppose that his plea is for the "remnant of the pious" (Zimmerli 1979:249) in Jerusalem? This interpretation does not hold in light of my earlier reading according to which there is no pious remnant in Jerusalem. I would therefore suggest that the prophet's question again concerns the fate of the *golah* in

Babylon. Would they too be destroyed in YHWH's anger over Jerusalem, or would they as the true remnant of Israel be spared? However, YHWH's answer concerns only the Jerusalemite remnant and evades Ezekiel's question.

3.232 More light is shed on the prophet's lament by its repetition in Ez. 11:13. Again, YHWH does not answer directly, but the text presents a salvation oracle, which seems to be somewhat misplaced in the apocalyptic context of Ez. 8-11, or even Ez. 3-24. Although Ez. 11:14-21 is a distinct textual unit, as indicated by the introductory formula "וַיְהִי דְבַר יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר" and the word of YHWH came to me:" (Ez. 11:14), its textual proximity to Ezekiel's lament presents the reader with the impression that the oracle is indeed the answer to the prophet's question. Unlike Ez. 9:9-10, however, the present oracle does not concern the Jerusalemite remnant, but the *golah*, which suggests that the exiles were in fact Ezekiel's only concern.

Human being, every one  
of your brothers, the men  
of your exile and the  
whole house of Israel,  
regarding all of whom the  
inhabitants of Jerusalem  
say: "They have gone far  
from YHWH," they have  
been given the land for a  
possession. (Ez. 11:15)

בֶּן-אָדָם אַחִיךָ אַחִיךָ  
אִנְשֵׁי גְאֻלְתְּךָ וְכָל-בֵּית  
יִשְׂרָאֵל כֻּלָּה אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ  
לָהֶם יֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם  
רָחִקוּ מֵעַל יְהוָה לָנוּ  
הִיא נְתַנָּה הָאָרֶץ  
לְמִוְרָשָׁה:

<sup>f</sup> Literally "your brother, your  
brother." cf. GKC §123c

3.233 In this most obvious juxtaposition of the two communities, YHWH makes it unmistakably clear that it is the *golah* that is the true remnant of Israel. The prophet makes his plea on their behalf, and he is assured that he and his fellow exiles will not be destroyed, but will inherit the land from which they have been

removed.

I shall gather you from  
the nations and bring you  
together from the lands  
where you have been  
scattered, and I shall give  
to you the soil of Israel.  
(Ez. 11:17)

וקבצתי אתכם מן-העמים  
ואספתי אתכם  
מן-הארצות אשר נפצותם  
בהם ונתתי לכם  
את-אדמת ישראל:

As for the others who regard themselves as Israelites, their fate is final, as Ez. 9:9-10 affirms.

3.234 It is significant that Ezekiel equates "the whole house of Israel" with "all those of whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem say: "They have gone far from YHWH." His equation is expressive of his understanding that Israel is exclusively constituted by the *golah*. There simply is no Israel aside from the exiles. The land and its capital city are empty and its inhabitants have been executed, smelted in a crucible, burnt over hot fire, killed by their lovers. With them, the impurity of the land has been eradicated and the exiles await their return to the purified land, "so that they may walk in my statutes and keep my customs and do them, and they shall be mine, and I shall be their god" (Ez. 11:20).

3.24 One more aspect of Ezekiel's apocalypse should be discussed before we can turn to Ezekiel's vision of the new Jerusalem. Not only is the land purged of its inhabitants, even YHWH himself leaves his sanctuary and city. His exodus proceeds in a gradual fashion, beginning at the sanctuary and moving toward the eastern gate.

And the cherubim raised  
their wings and they  
ascended from the ground  
before my eyes as they

וישאו הכרובים  
את-כנפיהם וירומו  
מן-הארץ לעיני כצאתם  
והאופנים לעממם ויעמדו

went out with the chariot  
wheels beside them. And  
it stood at the entrance  
gate of the house of  
YHWH to the east, and  
the glory of the god of  
Israel was above them.  
(Ez. 10:19)

פתח שער בית-יהוה  
הקדמוני וכבוד  
אלהי-ישראל עליהם  
מלמעלה:

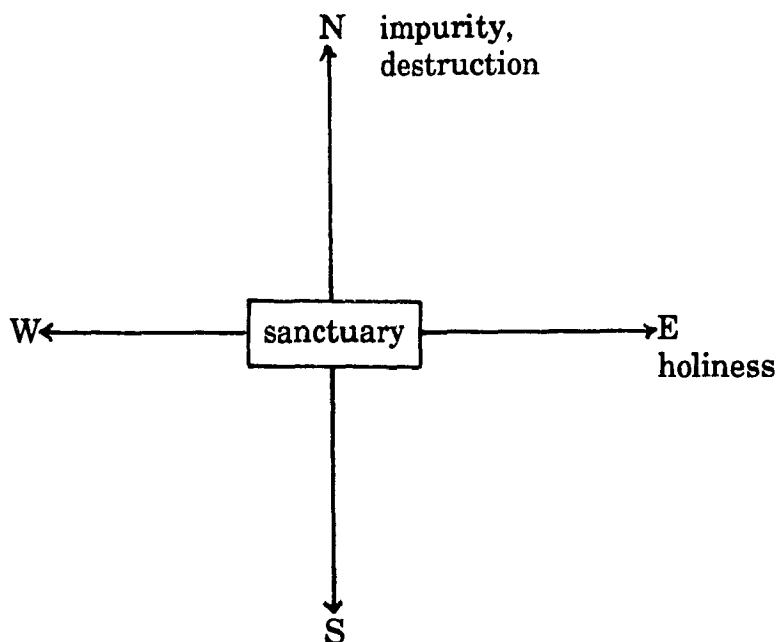
The journey is continued after Ezekiel encounters a cabal of twenty five men, and after the rescue of the *golah* has been assured.

And the glory of YHWH  
rose from the midst of the  
city and stood on the  
mountain east of the city.  
(Ez. 11:23)

ויעל כבוד יהוה מעל  
תוך העיר ויעמד  
על-ההר אשר מקדם  
לעיר:

3.241 It is interesting to note that the direction of YHWH's exodus proceeds along an east-west axis, perpendicular to the north-south axis along which defilement and destruction have entered the city, or along which the intensity of defilement in Ez. 8 increased (cf. *supra*). Thus, we have two functional axes in Ezekiel's ideology, one axis of impurity and destruction and one of holiness, since it is the axis of YHWH's movement (Ez. 40-48). Both axes meet at the nuclear shrine of Jerusalem, the centre of holiness, where Ezekiel observes the greatest obscenity (the gravity of action is determined by the central position of its location in space), the place where the group of executioners begin their total destruction of the city, and from which YHWH sets out to abandon the empty city. We shall see in the next chapter that the axis of holiness in Ezekiel's ideology is equivalent to the axis of purity which dominates Ezekiel's vision of the new and purified Jerusalem (Ez. 40-48). For now, suffice it to

fig. 4



say, that the destruction in Jerusalem proceeding from the nuclear sanctuary and the exodus of YHWH from his sanctuary have created a vacuum in the city that is now devoid of god and people.

3.3 The three passages analyzed above show very clearly the bipolar position of the two Israelite groups, the *golah* and the Jerusalemite remnant. The former is spared from destruction, while the latter is fully eradicated. The vacuum resulting from the total collapse of the city's socio-religious structure, represented by the annihilation of its physical structure, is soon to be filled by the exilic community, being the true heirs of the land of Israel and its central capital Jerusalem (cf. Ez. 11:14-21). The Jerusalemite community, although located within the geographic

boundaries of Israel, is no longer included in the national designation of the people who are to inhabit the land. The homelander has lost their social structure, their identity, and lastly their existence (as Israelites). The land of Israel belongs to the *golah*, for there is no Israel apart from the *golah*.

## *4.0 Paradise Contained - The Restoration*

4.01 Ez. 40-48 is the largest coherent textual unit in the book of Ezekiel. Presenting an ideological blueprint of the new Israel to be claimed by the returning *golah*, it differs stylistically and thematically from other sections in the book. The language is largely characterised by architectural descriptions and legal sayings, rather than prophecies of doom or hope. The text also constitutes Ezekiel's second visionary journey to Jerusalem. This last statement should be qualified, since the city's name is in fact never mentioned and there have been several attempts to read the vision in the context of a different geographic locale. Richter, for example, has argued that the site of Ezekiel's city is a purely ideal one, and Mackay suggests that the prophet was referring to the sanctuary at Shechem rather than to Jerusalem (cf. Zimmerli 1983a:347). Richter's argument is valid in light of the author's idealising tendencies in chs. 40-48. A number of descriptions are indeed so abstract or plainly unrealistic that it is almost impossible to see the text as a reference to a real place, hypothetical or existing. As Jonathan Smith (1987:49) rightly observed: "The structure is not any extant building. It is an ideal construction, unconstrained by the pragmatics of architecture or the accidentalities of history." Nevertheless, there are a number of textual indicators which suggest that Ezekiel had indeed the central city of Jerusalem in mind, albeit in an idealised form.

4.011 Zimmerli, for example, observes that the high hill (הַר גִּבֹּר) to which the prophet is transported in Ez. 40:2 has a textual parallel in 17:22, where it is "caught



up in the immediately following verse 23 by *הַר מְרוֹם יִשְׂרָאֵל* ('the high mountain of Israel'), the expression which here and in 20:40 (plural 34:14) describes the city and temple mount of Jerusalem" (Zimmerli 1983a:347). More important are, however, the textual parallels between Ez. 40ff. and Ez. 8-11. In both cases, the prophet is said to be transported in visions of god (*בְּמַרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים* - 8:3, 40:2) to the land of Israel. The visionary journey of both accounts begins at a gateway of the city (8:5) or temple district (40:6) and then proceeds toward the centre of holiness, the nuclear sanctuary, the only difference being that the vision of the defiled city in 8-11 proceeds along a north-south axis, while the latter moves from east to west. A further parallel is YHWH's exodus from the temple in Ez. 10-11 and his return to the sanctuary in Ez. 43. All of these elements suggest that Ez. 40-48, the only other oracle for which the prophet is removed from his ordinary sphere of activity besides chs. 8-11 and ch. 37, is in fact an ideal mirror image of the great apocalypse of Jerusalem. While the earlier oracle describes the defilement and destruction of the city and temple, the second vision relates its re-creation.

4.02 Thus, although Ez. 40-48 undoubtedly describes an ideal state, it nevertheless intends an associative link of this ideal to the city of Jerusalem. Once again, it is more important to focus on the ideological significance of the text and its semiotic value rather than its geographic or historic documentation. The author may not have intended to describe the actual city of Jerusalem in this section, but he certainly meant to express a specific ideology which characterises the re-created city of Jerusalem and the land of Israel. In other words, the prophet's words reflect his

ideology, not a physical reality. Consequently, my analysis of the text will not be concerned with the details of architectural and legal descriptions, but with the thematic and compositional structures of the book and their semiotic value for Ezekiel's ideology.

#### *4.1 In Visions of God - Ezekiel 40:1-4*

4.10 The four verses at the beginning of the prophet's ideological blueprint for the new Israel are remarkably extensive by comparison to other introductory sections in the book of Ezekiel. The language of the text also transcends the style and format of regular introductory formulas in the book of Ezekiel or elsewhere in the canon of Hebrew prophetic literature. This being the case, we may assume that the themes presented in this section are of specific significance for the text following it. For the purpose of this analysis, I shall consider three themes in particular; a) the visionary site of the revelation--the high mountain of vs. 2, b) the designation of the prophet's audience--the house of Israel, and c) the date of the revelation--new year's day in the twenty fifth year of the exile.

4.11 Jon Levenson (1976) has put forth an intriguing study of the traditions behind the theme of the mountain in Ez. 40ff, identifying three separate themes with very distinct histories which are united by the prophet in the text at hand. These themes are: a) the mountain of Ezekiel's vision as Mt. Zion, b) Ezekiel's mountain as

the garden of Eden, and c) Ezekiel's mountain as Mt. Sinai and as Mt. Abarim. Since the legislative character of Ez. 40-48 shows a thematic (and to a certain extent stylistic) affinity to the tradition of Mt. Sinai, I would like to focus specifically on the last of Levenson's traditional themes.

4.111 In Israelite mythology, the mountain of Sinai is almost always associated with the prophetic figure of Moses and the reception of YHWH's law by his followers, who thereby received their identity as the people of Israel. In the present canon, this law is contained in the books of the Pentateuch, while legal material outside Pentateuch is generally restricted to either references to or restatements of the torah of Moses. Levenson (1976:39) rightly observes that "Ezek. 40-48 is the only corpus of legislation in the Hebrew Bible which is not placed in the mouth of Moses." The text of Ezekiel's vision of the new Israel thus presents the reader, who is accustomed to associating legislative statements with the tradition of Moses, with an implicit parallel between the law-giver Ezekiel and the law-giver Moses. Just as Moses received YHWH's law for the old Israel on Mt. Sinai, so Ezekiel is brought to a high mountain before he is given the cultic constitution for the new Israel. Another parallel can be seen between Ezekiel's vision of the new temple (Ez. 40-42) and Moses' vision of tabernacle's blueprint.

According to everything  
which I am about to show  
you on the mountain, the  
blueprint of the  
tabernacle and the  
blueprint of its  
implements, thus you  
shall make. (Ex. 25:9)

ככל אשר אני מראה  
אותך על ההר את  
תכנית המשכן ואת  
תכנית כל-כליו ובן  
תעשו:

On the basis of these observations, Levenson (1976:41) concludes that "[i]n the legislation and the vision of the sanctuary, Ezekiel's mountain is typologically identical to Sinai."

4.12 This reading has two significant implications. First, by linking Ezekiel to Moses, the legislation provided by the former is given equal status to that of the latter. Thus, as the mosaic law presented the people of pre-exilic Israel with a basis for national unity and identity, Ez. 40-48 presents the crucial focus of identity formation for the true remnant of post-exilic Israel - the *golah*. Ezekiel's rhetoric against the city of Jerusalem before its destruction and purification reflected a very specific world-view, the violation of which was the basis for the city's condemnation. This world-view with its emphasis on centrality, singularity, strictly defined national boundaries and clearly outlined social relationships is now posited as the *Weltanschauung* of the new, re-created Israel and given the seal of authority by the identification with mosaic legislation. In the past two chapters I have shown that Ezekiel's ideology of purity and defilement has served to define the identity, or rather non-identity, of the Jerusalemite remnant. Ez. 40-48 now posits the same world-view in the format of a legislation through which the new Israel is to come into existence in the now purified land.

4.13 Another implication of Levenson's reading is the unification of two dominant themes in Israelite cosmology, Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion, the holy mountain of Jerusalem. Pre-exilic Israelite literature knows two distinct historical mythologies: the mythology of Sinai, focusing on the exodus experience and the origins of Israel

outside the geographic boundaries of the promised land, and the mythology of Zion, focusing on Jerusalem as the "navel of the earth" and the eternal centre of the world's historical and political order, exemplified by many Psalms. Ezekiel's vision of cultic obscenities in ch. 8 with its tendency toward centrality, as well as his attacks against the city on the grounds of decentralisation and pluralisation, shows clearly that the city of Jerusalem has a nuclear aspect in the prophet's ideology. In this respect, Ezekiel's rhetoric is akin to the Zion mythology, as would be fitting for a former priest of the central sanctuary. On the other hand, Ezekiel's sphere of prophetic activity is located outside the geographic boundaries of the land of Israel. Likewise, the formation of the *golah* as the only true remnant of Israel takes place abroad, as did the first origin of the people of Israel under Moses. However, the expected exodus of the *golah* and their return to the promised land is specifically directed toward the central city of Jerusalem, the eternal Zion. Thus, in Ezekiel's "high mountain" we find the unification of Zion and Sinai, a mythological reflection of the imminent unification of the land and its central city with its true owners.

4.14 This consideration raises another question. What is the significance of Ezekiel's use of the term "house of Israel?" Having stated that the true owners of the land of Israel are the exiles, it is logical to conclude that the designation "house of Israel" signifies the *golah*. Furthermore, the command

Tell everything you see to  
the house of Israel!  
(Ez. 40:4b)

הגד את-כל-אשר-אתה  
ראה לבית ישראל:

can only apply to the *golah*, since, as I concluded in the previous chapter, there is no

Israel aside from the *golah*. However, the historical usage of the designation "Israel" carries a much broader connotative field. Traditionally the name "Israel" has been used to describe the descendants of the legendary patriarch Jacob (or Israel), whose twelve sons are identified with the twelve traditional tribes of Israel. After the division of the two kingdoms, however, Israel came to signify the ten northern tribes, as opposed to the kingdom of Judah in the south. While Ezekiel is undoubtedly aware of this division, he uses the terms "Israel" and "Judah" completely interchangeably, to denote the same group of people. Even in Ez. 23, the most direct reference to the two separate kingdoms, the northern tribes are referred to as Samaria (Ez. 23:4) rather than Israel. Zimmerli (1979:483) rightly observes that "[s]ince 'Israel' in Ezekiel is the emphatic name for the whole people of God, the antithesis Israel-Judah is impossible for him." It appears therefore, that the designation "house of Israel" in Ez. 40:4b refers not only to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, in which the *golah* has its origin, but also to the ten northern tribes, which had been destroyed by Assyrian forces more than a century earlier. The whole of what used to be Israel before the separation of the kingdoms is now contained in the returning *golah*.

4.141 Ever since von Rad's *Theologie des Alten Testament* (1957) most scholars have held the opinion that the name "Israel", excluding the northern kingdom from its scope of definition, is in fact representative of the later books of Chronicles. Representative of this notion is Myer's observation regarding the "Chronicler's view that only those elements of Israel that remained loyal to the Davidic line were the

true Israel" (Myers 1965:65). If this reading is correct, it would suggest that Ezekiel's understanding of the new Israel, as composed of Judah and Benjamin only, did indeed become normative in the second temple period.<sup>17</sup> Yet, whereas von Rad had argued that Chronicles presents a historical picture in which Judah is representative for all of Israel, we must go further to say that in fact only a small portion of Judah and Benjamin constitutes the "house of Israel" now. The rest of Judah and Benjamin has been excluded from this definition, has been destroyed and annihilated, just as the ten northern tribes had been annihilated 150 years earlier. Interestingly, Ez. 40-48 ends with the distribution of land among all twelve traditional tribes of Israel. Thus, all of Israel is restored and brought into existence through the *golah*.

4.15 The last element that ought to be considered in regard to the introductory text is the dating of the revelation.

In the twenty-fifth year of  
our exile, at the beginning  
of the year on the tenth of  
the month, in the  
fourteenth year after the  
city had been struck, on  
this very day, the hand of  
YHWH was upon me and  
brought me there.  
(Ez. 40:1)

כעשרים וחמש שנה  
לגלותנו בראש השנה  
כעשור לחדש בארבע  
עשרה שנה אחר אשר  
הכחה העיר כעצם  
היו סהזה היתה עלי  
יד-יהוה ויבא אתי  
שמה:

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<sup>17</sup> Myer's reading has been disputed by H.G. Williamson (1977), who argued that the author of Chronicles had not intended to present Judah and Benjamin as representative for the true Israel, but to express that both kingdoms had in fact an equal claim to the name of Israel. However, Williamson's argument focuses on the ideological representation of the northern kingdom in the book of Chronicles, and does not preclude a post-exilic *pars pro toto* representation of Judah and Benjamin for the whole of Israel after the disappearance of the ten northern tribes. Even in the eyes of later chroniclers writing at a time when Israel was indeed composed of the remnants of Benjamin and Judah only, the northern kingdom may well have had a claim to the name "Israel" at some point in time; their destruction, however, obviously obliterated this claim.

The date is paralleled by Lev. 25:9, according to which the Year of Jubilee was proclaimed on the tenth day of the seventh month on the day of atonement. Ezekiel's tenth day of the month at the beginning of the year corresponds to the tenth day after the new year's day (הַיּוֹם הַכַּפֻּרִים וְהַשְּׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִת), or the day of atonement (יִוֹם הַכַּפֻּרִים). Furthermore, the twenty fifth year marks the halfway point between two jubilee years. It is unlikely that this parallel between the dating of the revelation of the new Israel and the date of the jubilee year is purely accidental, especially since the date is given in an unusually elaborate fashion. The significance of this parallel should therefore be regarded in more detail.

4.151 The Israelite calendar ordained the celebration of a sabbath year, every seven years, during which farm land was to lie fallow. The jubilee year, which was proclaimed immediately after the seventh consecutive sabbath year (i e. every fifty years), also required that all servants were to be set free and that land property was to revert to its original owners. The common theological interpretation of this practice is based on the understanding that all land belongs ultimately to YHWH and that the people of Israel are his servants. Consequently, it would be impossible to sell land or acquire a servant on a permanent basis, and the jubilee year functions as a checkpoint which guarantees that an Israelite cannot ultimately lose his land or liberty.<sup>18</sup> In sociological terms, the restitution of property at regular intervals agrees well with the economic system characteristic of ancient near eastern societies, the tributary mode of production, in which all land was ultimately owned by the

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<sup>18</sup> This view is best represented by North (1954).



central state apparatus which granted the use of land to peasants in return for an agricultural surplus tax and labour conscription. However, high taxation often led to a peasant's inability to meet the state's requirements and forced him into selling his land or his person. The jubilee year would therefore function as a means to correct the excesses of debt slavery.<sup>19</sup>

4.152 What interest, we must ask, does Ezekiel have in the jubilee year, so as to incorporate it into his rhetoric of restoration? It appears that the three characteristics of the jubilee are well in agreement with the prophet's larger ideology. The land lying fallow, for example, reiterates the myth of the empty land, the exilic notion that Jerusalem and Israel are deserted by god and people, ready to receive the returning *golah* (cf. Ez. 8-11). The element of personal liberty could well refer to the exile's exodus from Babylon. Lev. 25:39,42, specify that after the exodus from Egypt no Israelite shall be reduced to the status of a servant (עַבְדִּי). Likewise, the *golah's* expected return to the land of Israel marks the restitution of personal liberty and liberation from exilic captivity. Most significant, however, is the restitution of landed property to its true owners. These are, as I have tried to demonstrate in the preceding two chapters, the exiles in Babylon. Ezekiel thus appeals to the custom of the jubilee year to give further authority to his claim to the land of Israel.<sup>20</sup>

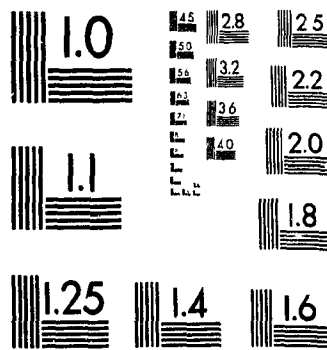
4.16 We see that all three characteristics of the jubilee year can function as

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<sup>19</sup> Pioneering among the sociological studies of ancient Israel is Norman K. Gottwald's *The Tribes of Yahweh* (1979), which discusses the tributary mode of production in relation to biblical literature at great length.

<sup>20</sup> Lev. 25 is most likely post-exilic in composition, but passages like Jer. 34:8-11 and Ez. 46:17 indicate that the idea of the jubilee year was well established by the time of the exile.

2 of/de 2



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART  
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significant symbols in Ezekiel's ideology and his prophecies of restoration. The date given for the revelation of Ez. 40-48 thus serves as a symbolic focus to the prophecy of restoration. Furthermore, we shall see in the following analysis that the symbolism of the jubilee not only introduces the prophecy of restoration, but in fact permeates the entire description of the temple, "whose inner structure is built on the numerals twenty five, fifty, and their multiples" (Zimmerli 1983a:347).

## 4.2 A Wall Around the Temple - Ez. 40:5 - 42:20

4.21 The first major subsection in Ezekiel's vision of the new Israel is constituted by a description of the temple area. The prophet and his guide begin their journey at a wall around the temple district.

And see, there was a wall encircling the building roundabout and the length of the measuring rod in the man's hand was six long cubits, each being a cubit and a hand breadth, and he measured the thickness of the structure, one reed, and the height, one reed. (Ez. 40:5)

והנה חומה מחוץ לבית  
סביב סביב וכיד האיש  
קנה המדה שש-אמות  
כאמה וטפח וימד  
את-רחב הכנין קנה  
אחר וקומה קנה אחד:

This verse is quite peculiar in several respects. For example, Ezekiel's first temple vision Ez. 8-11 as well as the description of the new temple in Ez. 40-42 are characterised by the prophet passing through gateway structures. The sudden

appearance of a wall seems to defy the style of description up to this point and hereafter. Zimmerli (1983a:348) and Gese (1957:13) have further noted that the second mention of the man with the measuring reed after vs. 3 is superfluous, but Zimmerli goes on to argue that the rest of the text is dependent on the clarification that the unit of measure employed here is a long cubit as opposed to a standard cubit. Most unusual, however, is the fact that vs. 5 gives a measurement of height for the wall surrounding the temple district, while the description of the temple proper is given in two dimensions only, presenting the image of a blueprint, rather than that of a model. All this has moved Fohrer (1955:223-4) to conclude that the verse is merely a later addition. Other scholars share his suspicion, but are generally a little more hesitant.

4.21 What is significant about Ez. 40:5 is its textual link to Ez. 42:15-20, which describes the same wall in more detail, and which concludes the description of the temple. The measurement of the latter also appears quite unrelated to the preceding text. Yet, simply to delete the verses may be throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Likewise, Zimmerli's initial explanation, that Ez. 40:5 serves to define the exact unit of measure, appears somewhat contrived, since it is not the model of the temple that is of importance here but the semiotic significance of its description. Thus, we may determine the function of Ez. 40:5 and 42:15-20 by looking at their structural position in the text. Placed at the beginning and end of the text, the two passages envelope the description of the temple complex, just as the wall they signify surrounds the temple area. The structure of the text is reflexive of its descriptive

content. In other words, the two passages are anything but superfluous. Rather than playing a functional role, Ez. 40:5 and 42:15-20 have a self-referential or poetic function (in the Jacobsonian sense), and as such, fulfill an important structural role in the compositional framework of Ez. 40:5 - 42:15-20.

4.22 The purpose of this wall around the temple area is:

to separate the sacred      להבדיל בין הקדש לחל  
from the profane  
(Ez. 42:20b)

We have seen in ch. 8 that the central aspect of Jerusalem's impurity was its failure to separate the realm of the sacred from that of the mundane. The cultic obscenities observed by the prophet occur at structurally liminal points, gateway thresholds, holes in the wall, or the area in the temple between the porch and the altar, in short, points which are to regulate the contact between YHWH and his sanctuary and the outer world. Furthermore, the last obscenity (Ez. 8:16) was considered the gravest not because of its practice but because of its specific location which connected the central sanctuary to the outer parts of the temple. The defective separation between the sacred and the profane in Ez. 8 is now paralleled by an all surrounding structure guarding the sanctity of the temple district. The *inclusio* formed by Ez. 40:5 and 42:15-20 reflects this structure at the textual level, but in doing so, it also emphasises the significance of the boundary which is the all inclusive requirement of Israel's future temple.

4.23 One more element ought to be mentioned in regard to Ezekiel's description of the separating wall. Ez. 42:15-20 relates how the prophet's guide measures the

wall, 500 cubits on each side (a multiple of 50!), proceeding from East to North to South to West. Scholars have long noted the impracticality of this proceeding and often refer to LXX which gives an E-N-W-S sequence. Since the first sequence is, however, no more unrealistic that the movement of the prophet himself from Babylon to Jerusalem, there is no reason to reject the initial sequence presented by the MT. Furthermore, I have argued that the semiotic value of description is more important for a constructive analysis of Ez. 40-48 than historical or practical considerations. While an E-N-W-S progression would have no symbolic significance, E-N-S-W does carry a fair amount of semiotic weight, insofar as it underscores the basic East-West axis of holiness, the axis by which YHWH left his temple and city in Ez. 10-11, and by which he reenters his sanctuary in Ez. 43. LXX's attempt to correct a seemingly false sequence of directions must therefore be seen as a failure to recognise the symbolic meaning of the text.

4.24 After the vision of the all-inclusive wall follows a description of doorways leading to the outer court of the temple (Ez. 40:6-27). Most prominent here is the description of the eastern gate which receives eleven verses as opposed to four in case of the north and south gate. The gate is described as a closed structure of 25 by 50 cubits, reflecting once again the temporal focus of the oracle in regard to the jubilee. The prophet's guide first measures the inner parts of the gateway, comprising two thresholds, one vestibule and three smaller rooms separated by pillars on each side of the gate. The structure of the gate is thus completely symmetrical. Two further gates are subsequently described, although with less detail. Yet, the phrase

and its posts and its  
vestibule were of the  
same size as those of the  
first gate (Ez. 40:21aβ)

ואילו ואלמו היה  
כמדת השער הראשון

which is repeated in vs. 24 in a somewhat shortened form, indicates that the three gates are essentially identical.

4.241 It is significant that the second theme in Ezekiel's description of the new temple is comprised by doorway structures. Having established the separation between the sacred and the profane, the prophet now proceeds to specify the points of contact between these two categories. Again, the gateways represent marginal structures within the temple building and, as such, represent points of danger and potential defilement, the disastrous effects of which have been noted above (cf. *supra*). It is therefore quite logical for Ezekiel to focus the description of his journey to the inner chambers on the temple's gateways. After the horrors of defilement by the uncontrolled infiltration of outside elements into the structure of the temple, Ezekiel's chief concern for the new temple is the guarantee of intact boundaries with functioning, i.e. clearly defined, regulatory structures controlling the contact between the realm of the sacred and that of the profane.

4.242 Having completed his description of the outer gates, Ezekiel and his guide proceed to measure the inner gates of the building (Ez. 40:28-37), thereby approximating the centre of holiness. Again the description that follows focuses exclusively on the marginal elements in the structure surrounding the inner court. It is of significance that the gates of the inner court are said to have the same measurements as the outer gates. The measure of all gates is therefore presented in

a singular, standardised fashion, centred around the numerals 25, 50, and their multiples. This singularity is expressive of Ezekiel's centralised ideology and is in clear contrast to the plurality of Jerusalem's previous obscenities.

4.25 The description of the gates is followed by the depiction of a sacrificial altar (Ez. 40:38-43) and a number of priestly chambers (40:44-46). The authenticity of these passages has been disputed by many scholars, and it is unanimously agreed that the former of the two is a later addition. Be that as it may, more important for the purpose of this analysis is Ezekiel's ascent to the holy of holies (Ez. 40:48-41:4). The prophet climbs another ten steps, which, when combined with the eight steps leading to the inner court and the seven steps leading to the outer court once again reflect the central numerical focus of twenty five. Zimmerli (1983a:355-6) has observed that there is an increasing narrowing of the passage ways (i.e. the actual entrance, not the gateway structure) as one approaches the central sanctuary. While the entrance to the outer court was fourteen cubits wide, the entrance to the second chamber only measured ten cubits and the entrance to the holy of holies a mere six cubits. 'This narrowing of the passage ways toward the gravitational centre of the temple structure signifies a decrease in potential contact between the sacred and the profane. This limitation finds its logical conclusion in the central sanctuary, which is completely prohibited to human beings. The prophet himself does not enter the central chamber. His guide merely announces:

This is the holy of holies.  
(Ez. 41:4bβ)

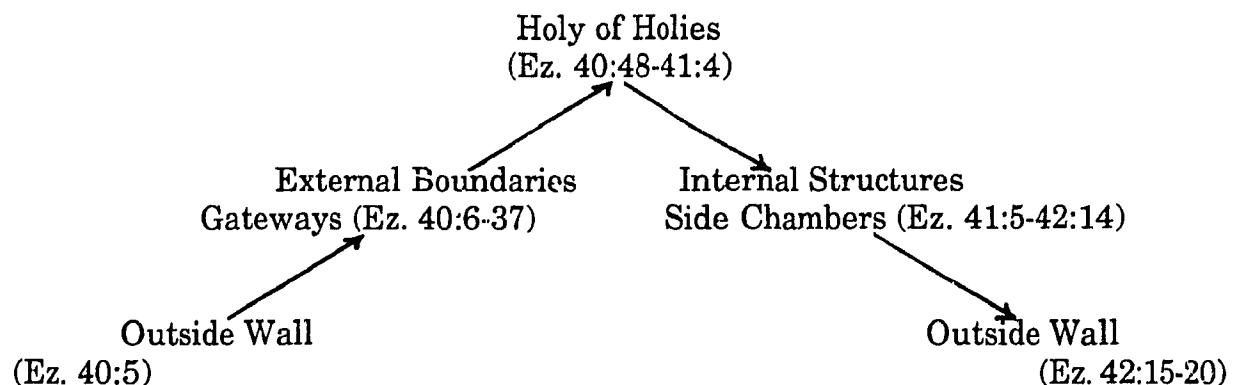
זֶה קֹדֶשׁ הַקִּדְשִׁים

4.26 The rest of the section deals with the depiction of side chambers and



similar structures in the temple complex (Ez. 41:5 - 42:14). The description itself is not a matter of concern at this point. It is important, however, to recognise the structural significance of the chambers in regard to the larger compositional framework. Unlike the walls and gates of the temple building, the side chambers do not function to separate the sacred from the profane. Rather, they signify concrete internal structures within the temple building. In Ez. 8 we observed the violation of external boundaries as well as the disintegration of internal lines or social relationships as the basis of defilement. If we regard Ez. 40-48 as an inverse mirror image of Ez. 8-11, and if we see the walls and gateways in Ez. 40 as guarantees for protective boundaries, we might posit that the side chambers of Ez. 41-42 signify the internal structures of the temple system. Both descriptions are organised around the description of the holy of holies which is located at the textual centre of Ez. 40-42. Thus, the compositional structure of the passage presents us with the following scheme.

fig. 5



The nuclear sanctuary thus lies at the centre of Ezekiel's temple vision as well as at the centre of his ideology. It is the focal point of cultic action to which the entire ideology relates. Protected by external boundaries and regulatory structures, it provides a stable point of reference for all internal structures.

### *4.3 YHWH's Return - Ez. 43:1 - 44:3*

4.31 The textual scope of the next subsection which describes the return of Israel's national deity to the nuclear shrine has been strongly debated. Greenberg (1984:189) suggests that Ez. 43:1-12 ought to be included in the larger vision of the future temple (Ez. 40ff.), so that YHWH's return to the sanctuary would represent the final climax of the temple vision. However, his argument stands in contradiction to the compositional structure of Ez. 40-42 which is enveloped by two descriptions of a surrounding wall and which has the holy of holies as its textual and semiotic climax and focal point. An inclusion of Ez. 43:1ff would inevitably distort this structure, break the textual closure effected by Ez. 42:15-20 and shift the focal point, so as to unbalance the prophet's ideological expression. On the other end of the spectrum, we find the argument of Gese (1957:33ff.), that Ez. 43:1-9 should be seen as the first part in the larger vision of Ez. 43:1-44:5, which includes YHWH's entry into the temple, the description of a sacrificial altar and ordinances for a consecration ceremony for the new temple. Other scholars have argued that the theme of YHWH' return is

either comprised by Ez. 43:1-9 (Bertholet 1936) or by Ez. 43:1-12 (Zimmerli 1983a).

4.311 A radically different approach was undertaken by Fohrer (1951:241) who suggested that YHWH's entrance to the temple proceeded in fact in three stages - Ez. 43:1-9, 44:1-3, and 47:1-12. - which ought to be regarded as essentially one coherent textual unit. His argument is intriguing since the gradual entry of YHWH and the consecration of his temple could be seen as a parallel to the gradual exodus of the deity in Ez. 10 and 11. There is, however, a significant difference between the presentation of the description of the two events. While both passages describing YHWH's exodus are direct references to divine movement away from the sanctuary, YHWH's return to the temple is completed within the textual parameters of Ez. 43:1-9. Ez. 44:1-3 ordains that the eastern gate through which YHWH had entered the sanctuary is to be permanently closed and, as such, is indeed thematically connected to the divine movement of YHWH. Ez. 47:1-12, on the other hand, depicts a sacred spring of water issuing forth from the sanctuary and is in fact quite unrelated to the event.

4.32 Part of the dispute about the textual scope of the passage and its localisation in the larger context is due to the fact that no definite closing or introductory formulas are to found in the text. Fohrer's classification on the basis of thematic content is therefore a helpful aid. Unfortunately, Fohrer did not consider the possibility that the text's thematic content could stand in direct correlation to its compositional structure. If Ez. 43:1-9 and 44:1-3 refer to YHWH's divine movement, as I would argue with Fohrer, we may note that the former refers to the initiation of

the event by YHWH's entrance into the temple, while the latter points to its permanent closure. It requires no stretch of the imagination to posit that the two passages may therefore in fact delimit the beginning and end of the textual subsection at hand. This idea is also supported by the prophet's position at the outer eastern gate in both passages (Ez. 43:1, 44:1). The closure of the gate thus signifies the compositional closure of the text.

4.33 At the centre of the text is the description of the temple's sacrificial altar. Ez. 43:18-27 further specifies the sacrifice ordained for the consecration of the temple. The account of the altar may at first appear unconnected to the descriptions of divine movement surrounding it which has moved exegetes to regard it as an entirely separate composition. Even Fohrer (1955), who pointed out the connection between Ez. 43:1-9 and 44:1-3, did not consider the possibility that the text may indeed be related to the descriptions of divine movement surrounding it. Zimmerli (1983a:422), following Bertholet (1936:152) even goes as far as to reject the entire middle section of the text, including Ez. 43:10-17, since it "does not stand in a recognisable literary context." He proposes instead that the description of the altar should, "from the point of view of context", have its place after 40:47, where the altar is in fact briefly mentioned as part of the larger temple architecture. This point of view may be misleading, however, since it is not primarily content that characterised the temple vision, but structure, and the description of the sacrificial altar amidst walls and gates would inevitably distort the well balanced composition of Ez. 40-42.

4.34 To remain consistent, we should ask if, on the other hand, Ez. 43:10-27

contributes in any way to the compositional structure of Ez. 43:1-44:3. The function of the sacrificial altar along with the ordinances regarding its consecration is the sanctification of the temple.

Seven days they shall  
atone for the altar and  
purify it and so perfect it.  
And when they have  
completed these days,  
from the eighth day on,  
the priests shall make  
burnt offerings on the  
altar and peace offerings ,  
and I shall delight in you,  
says [the Lord] YHWH.  
(Ez. 43:26-7)

שבעת ימים יכפרו  
את-המזבח וטהרו אתו  
ומלאו ידו ויכלו  
את-הימים והיה כיום  
השמיני והלאה יעשו  
הכהנים על-המזבח  
את-עולותיכם  
ואת-שלמיכם ורצאתי  
אתכם נאם [אדני]  
יהוה:

The description differs stylistically from the blueprint-like account of the temple building in Ez. 40-42, but the theme of consecration followed by a properly functioning sacrificial cult is well in accord with YHWH's entrance to the temple. Both events refer to the sanctification encompassing both the divine and the human sphere; the former represented by YHWH's movement, the latter by the priests' sacrificial practice.

4.35 The divine and the human contributions to the sanctification of the temple is again presented in a balanced A-B-A structure. It is important to note that their presentation could not have taken place in random order, for any disintegration of separating boundaries between divinity and humanity would imply a potential for greatest danger, as is indicated by Ez.43:8.

They had set their  
threshold by my threshold  
and their doorposts near

כתתם ספם את-ספי  
ומזוזתם אצל מזוזתי  
והקיר ביני וביניהם

my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them, and they have defiled my holy name with their obscenities which they committed, so I consumed them in my anger. (Ez. 43:8)

וּטְמְאוּ אֶת-שֵׁם קִדְשִׁי  
בְּתוֹעֲבוֹתָם אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ  
וְאָכַל אֹתָם בְּאַפִּי:

The above quotation, which invokes once again the impurity of the city and temple before their destruction, focuses appropriately on the structurally marginal positions of doorways and thresholds. Accounting for the uncontrollable intermingling of the human with the divine, characteristic of Jerusalem's earlier sins (cf. esp. Ez. 8), Ez. 43:8 counterpoints the balanced structure of Ezekiel's program of restoration, the blueprint of his ideology of purity. The consecration of the temple in Ez. 43:1-44:3 thus signifies the ideal, balanced relationship between YHWH and Israel. The text accounts for the most basic relationship in Ezekiel's ideological system, the relationship between deity and humanity. YHWH initiates the sanctification of the shrine by his entry into the sanctuary and finalises it by having his gate of entrance permanently closed. The sacrificial cult, standing at the centre of the text and representing the human component, then serves to maintain the proper relationship and balance between the two. The cult of YHWH stands at the centre of the new, post-exilic world order.

4.36 Furthermore, it is significant that YHWH enters the sanctuary on the east-west axis of divine movement. The closing of the eastern gate thus signifies a further separation of the divine and the human realm.

And YHWH said to me:  
 "This gate, closed it shall  
 be and it shall not be  
 opened and no man shall  
 enter through it, for  
 Y.IWH, the god of Israel  
 has entered through it, so  
 it shall be closed.  
 (Ez. 44:2)

ויאמר אלי יהוה השׁהר  
 הזה סגור יהיה לא  
 יפתח ואיש לא יבא  
 בו כי יהוה  
 אלהי-ישראל בא בו  
 והיה סגור:

Priests and worshippers are thus excluded from the east-west axis of divine movement. Only the prince (הַנְּשִׂיא) may enter the gate, although not through its proper entrance.

As for the prince, he shall  
 sit in it to eat bread  
 before YHWH, by way of  
 the gate's vestibule he  
 shall enter, and by its  
 way he shall leave.  
 (Ez. 44:3)

את-הַנְּשִׂיא [נְשִׂיא] הוא  
 ישב-בו לאכול-לחם  
 לפני יהוה מדרך אלם  
 השער יבוא ומדרכו  
 יצא:

<sup>a</sup>Lacking in LXX and Pesh.,  
 probably a dittograph.

4.361 Scholarly opinion is once again more or less unified in regard to the role of the prince. Eichrodt (1979:560) argues that "the one person counted worthy of treading on such a holy spot is the reigning prince of Israel." Levenson (1976:140) even ascribes a central position to this mysterious figure. It seems that the qualification that the prince may enter the sacred spot only via the gate's vestibule has been overlooked by Eichrodt, Levenson and others. On the basis of this restriction, Jonathan Smith has argued that the prince moves in fact counter to the direction of YHWH's movement.

The "prince" enters in a manner counter to the royal path of YHWH. This is to suggest that the "prince" is no king,

that, at best, he is a mock king as in some saturnalian role reversal. The putative special status of the prince turns out to be both literally and figuratively "arsey - turvey" with respect to YHWH's royalty. Furthermore, by limiting the prince's sphere of activity to the gatehouse of the outer gateway that opens onto the outer court, the king, rather than being "center stage," appears to be excluded, in this map, from the temple proper.

(Smith 1987:62)

4.362 Smith's reading is well in accord with the compositional structure of the text. The prince may eat his bread in the gateway of the temple, but is excluded from the axis of divine movement (or moves counter to it) as well as the centre of holiness. Likewise, the prince's position in the text is anything but central, but rather is restricted to one brief reference at the end of the text. Thus, the prince in Ezekiel's ideology is an appendage rather than a structural component.

4.363 Yet, the prince's appearance in Ezekiel's vision may still have a specific purpose. The reference to royalty is paralleled in the text by a condemnation of former kings who have defiled YHWH's name by placing their bodies too close to YHWH's sanctuary, thereby infringing upon YHWH's exclusive royalty over Israel. In the new Jerusalem, or in Ezekiel's ideology for post-exilic Israel, the political leader is to be excluded from the temple cult. The sacred/sacrificial and the profane/political spheres are not intermingled. In this respect it is significant that the new administrator is not referred to by the more common designation מלך - king, which was used to describe the former rulers of the defiled city, but is called נָשִׂיא - prince (*lit.* "exalted one"). The distribution of power in the temple complex is clearly focused on the religious component, i.e., the priestly class. The main objective of the



text is, however, the separation of the sacred and the profane (cf. Smith 1987:56). For a more detailed description of the hierarchy of power in the new Israel, I shall turn my attention to the next textual subsection.

#### *4.4 The Cultic Hierarchy - Ez. 44:4-31*

4.41 While the preceding two subsections dealt with material concerns relating to the basic separation of sacred and profane, the following text is occupied with rules and regulations concerning who may be admitted to the temple and who is to be excluded from the sanctuary. The text begins with yet another reference to Israel's impure past, now basing its defilement on the former presence of foreigners in the sanctuary. The theme, which has been employed in other prophecies of Ezekiel, now serves as a negative point of reference for the new Jerusalem. As the exclusion of the Jerusalemite remnant from the national sphere of Israel served as a means of self-definition for Ezekiel's *golah*, so the exclusion of foreigners in the land from the religious sphere of holiness serves to define the house of Israel, i.e. those who may rightly claim the land as theirs.

4.411 The command not to admit foreigners into the temple (Ez. 44:9) is followed by a number of ordinances about the temple personnel, the Levites and the Zadokite priests, of whom Ezekiel was one. However, the references regarding the two groups differ substantially in terms of style and content. The former are

accepted into the temple system, but appear to be reprimanded for earlier cultic misbehaviour.

But the Levites, who have  
gone far from me when  
Israel strayed from me,  
and they strayed after  
their idols, they shall bear  
their guilt. (Ez. 44:10)

כי אם-הלויים אשר  
רחקו מעלי בתעות  
ישראל אשר תעו מעלי  
אחרי גלוליהם ונשאו  
עונם:

The verse is quite cryptic, but the general interpretation has been that the Levitical priests are being reprimanded for idol worship in the past. This interpretation goes back to Wellhausen's *Prolegomena* and is based on the assumption that the hierarchical distinction between Levites and Zadokites was an innovation by Ezekiel.

4.412 This view has been recently challenged by Rodney Duke (1988) who argued on the basis of textual evidence that the assumption of innovation is not tenable and that the resulting conclusion that Ez. 44:6-16 is a judgement against the Levites is to be rejected. The main charge against the Israelites is not, he argues, idol worship or worship on high places, but the admission of foreigners into the temple and the misuse of cultic objects. This reading is well in accord with the rest of Ezekiel's ideology, which has been primarily concerned with the protection of the temple from foreign elements, the danger of which has been invoked immediately before Ez. 44:6-16, as well as the correct approach to the realm of the sacred.

Verse 8, beginning with a disjunctive *waw*, summarizes the charge against the Israelites: they did not keep the guard duty (*smr msmrt*) of Yahweh's holy things, and they set up foreigners to guard duty (*smr msmrt*) for Yahweh in his holy place.

(Duke 1988:64)

He concludes that the judgement over the Levites in verse 10 "they shall bear their guilt" is not a condemnation but an assignment of responsibility. To prevent the future infiltration of foreign elements into the sanctuary and to ensure that the cultic objects are not mishandled, the Levites were appointed as temple-guards. Should such a violation occur, the Levites alone would bear the responsibility for this defilement. Thus, the phrase לֹאֲנֵם ("their guilt") refers not exclusively to the Levites, but in fact to the entire people of Israel. "Instead of the whole congregation bearing the guilt, the guilt would be borne by those who had failed to guard against such infractions (Num. 17.27-18.7, 23)" (Duke 1988:65).

4.42 A higher responsibility still is given to the Zadokite priests, as is shown by the large number of laws specifying their conduct. Since the purpose of this analysis is to study the structure and rhetoric of Ezekiel's ideology, I shall not explicate the legislative statements given here. Suffice it to say that these ordinances further exemplify Ezekiel's understanding of the separation between the sacred and the profane.

And they shall show my  
people what is sacred and  
profane, and teach them  
what is impure and pure.  
(Ez. 44.23)

וְאַתָּה-עַמִּי יוֹדוּ כִּי־  
קֹדֶשׁ לַחֹל וְכִי־מִטָּא  
לְטָהוֹר יוֹדְעִם:

In other words, their function is comparable to that of the Levites mentioned before. However, while the Levites were put in charge of the doorways, the most vulnerable points within the temple structure, the Zadokites, being the only ones to have access to the inner court, are to supervise the sanctity of the sanctuary, to ensure that that

which is  $\text{קֹדֶשׁ}$  ("holy") remains indeed "set apart." We may thus perceive a certain cultic hierarchy in the text, proceeding from the Zadokites downwards over the Levites to the people.

4.421 Similarly, Jonathan Smith (1987) has argued convincingly that the text at hand presents a spatial system of hierarchy organised around the pure/impure dichotomy. Excluded from the system are foreigners who are located outside the surrounding wall of the temple district. On the other end of the spectrum are the Zadokite priests whose sphere of activity is located in the inner court of the temple, i.e., the location with the highest degree of holiness accessible to human beings. He locates the sphere of the Levites below that of the Zadokites, standing at the centre of the outer court, yet barred from the inner court and from the cultic service *per se*. The rest of the outer court is the sphere of the people who thus occupy the third position in the hierarchy.

4.422 Smith's taxonomy is well conceived and valuable insofar as it recognises the element of power and authority centred around the purity/impurity system as the quintessential parameter for the cultic hierarchy; the description of duties does not only signify an hierarchy of responsibilities, but indeed an hierarchy of power. Being at the centre of Ezekiel's hypothetical social system, the Zadokite priests represent the fulcrum of the prophet's ideology. Thus it is not the prince, whose absence from the text is significant, who occupies centre stage in the new Israel but the priestly class, Ezekiel's own Zadokites.

4.423 The central position of the Zadokite priests is further delineated by their

inability to claim land holdings.

But their inheritance am	והיתה להם לנחלה אני
I (their inheritance), and	נחלתם ואחזה לא-תתנו
you shall give them no	להם כישראל אני
possession in Israel, I am	אחזתם:
their possession.	
(Ez. 44:28)	

Both references concern land property or the land to which an Israelite is legally entitled, as the terms נחלה ("inheritance") and אחזה ("possession") indicate (cf. Zimmerli 1983a:462). Yet, the legislation should not be seen as a deprivation or a withholding of basic rights from the Zadokite class. As a reference to the restitution of land to its original owners implicit in the jubilee symbolism, the land regulation must be seen in the context of the tributary mode of production.<sup>21</sup> Real land ownership was practically impossible in this system, since all landed property belonged ultimately to the central administrative system which granted land for a use-possession in exchange for the surplus yield of agricultural production. Characteristic of the tributary mode of production is a highly centralised state system in which one nuclear city is sustained by a considerably large agricultural hinterland. The existence of other centres would inevitably diffuse the surplus of the land and render the economy inefficient. Consequently, the legislation that does not grant any landed property to the Zadokite class, which occupies the central position in Ezekiel's social system is not to be seen as a restriction, but as a statement in regard to the distribution of power. The Zadokite class represents the non-producing class in

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<sup>21</sup> For a good discussion of the tributary (or Asiatic) mode of production in regard to biblical literature and ancient Israelite society see Gottwald (1979) and Belo (1981).

Ezekiel's social system, granting land and being sustained by its surplus yield.

And the first of all the  
first fruits and every  
offering from among all  
your offerings shall belong  
to the priests and the first  
of your groats you shall  
give to the priest, so that  
a blessing may stay in  
your house. (Ez. 44:30)

וראשית כל-בכורי כל  
וכל-תרומת כל מכל  
תרומותיכם לכהנים  
יהיה וראשית  
ערסותיכם תתנו לכהן  
להנניח ברכה אל-כיתך:

4.424 In light of the preceding discussion, the above verse regulates the tribute of surplus yields to which the administrative system, composed of the central Zadokite class, is entitled. Again, nothing is said about the political administration and even the prince is excluded from the discourse, so that Ezekiel's priestly class is signified as the sole government, benefitting from the centralisation of Israel, manifest not only in cultic and social matters but also in economic and political affairs.

#### *4.5 Whose Land Shall It Be - Ez. 45 - 48*

4.50 The last major section of the book deals at length with a theme that has been central to Ezekiel's prophecies throughout--the distribution of the land of Israel to its rightful owners. The focal point of the prophet's ideology is thus presented as the textual *telos* of the book. This goal is once again underscored by the numerals 25, 50, and their multiples, symbolising the jubilee year and thus pointing toward the

restitution of landed property. The textual scope of the passage describing the appointment of land has been regarded as more limited by most scholars, beginning only with Ez. 47:14 (cf. e.g. Greenberg 1984:189). This text division is based on the observation that Ez. 45:9-46:15 are in fact quite unrelated to the theme of land distribution. However, the textual relationship between Ez. 45:1-8 and Ez. 48:9 cannot be denied, since both passages are thematically and stylistically very similar.

4.51 Gese (1957:95) has argued that the two passages ought to be seen as parallel doublets and Zimmerli (1983:517ff.) even suggested that Ez. 45:1-8 should in fact be seen as an excerpt from 47:13-48:29 that was later textually removed. Zimmerli's observation is valuable but ignores the other textual connection of Ez. 45:1-8 to Ez. 44:28-31, which precedes it immediately. His solution is therefore to be rejected, for if we were to relocate the passage at the end of the book, we would break up the textual link between 44:28-31 and 45:1-8. Furthermore, Ez. 45:9-12 is not as unrelated to the Ez. 45:1-8 as may appear, since it deals with the obligation of the prince whose portion of the land was listed in the preceding two verses (45:7-8), to exercise justice in the land. It further lists a number of weights and measures the accuracy of which seems to fall within the prince's domain. Following this description is an account of "cereal offerings, burnt offerings and peace offerings" (למנחה ולעולה ולשלמים - Ez. 45:15) based on the weights and measures which have just been established. Thus, even though the text may appear thematically incoherent, and although the theme of land distribution is seemingly interrupted by other pieces of legislation, the textual subsections of Ez. 45-48 are well linked together. Granted,

these links may be the work of a perceptive editor, but since the description of weights and offerings has no alternative context in the larger prophecy, it is unnecessary to presuppose a textual rearrangement. In fact, since the apportioning of land in Ez. 45:1-8 deals exclusively with the land of the prince and the temple system, i.e the civil and cultic authorities, a description of civil and cultic regulations may well have been intended here, before proceeding to the larger apportioning of land to the people.

4.511 This leaves the passage of Ez. 47:1-12 to be accounted for, which depicts a sacred stream of water issuing forth from the sanctuary. True, the text does not specifically deal with the apportioning of landed property, but the geographic theme as well as the fairly detailed references to existing places parallels the style and content of Ez. 47:13ff. If we consequently accept Ez. 45-48 as a coherent textual unit, we are presented with the following compositional structure:

- a) the temple district and the prince's land with cultic and civil regulations pertaining to these authorities (Ez. 45:1-46:24)

- b) a sacred stream issuing forth from the temple, providing life and fertility to lands around it, and flowing into the Dead Sea, thereby refreshing its waters (Ez. 47:1-12)

- c) the division of land among the twelve tribes of Israel and a reiteration of the apportioning of temple lands (Ez. 47:13-48:29)

This structure once again exemplifies Ezekiel's tendency to construct his ideology of restoration or rather re-creation concentrically, since the two passages regarding the division of land frame the description of a sacred stream that fertilizes these lands.



4.52 Contrary to these observations, Jonathan Smith (1987: 65ff.) has argued that the focus of the land division is the equality of the twelve tribes, and that the concentric description of the sanctuary moves to the background. I do not take issue with Smith's observations regarding the equality of Israel's tribes. I do, however, disagree with Smith's idea about the diminished role of the temple. The allotment of temple lands is listed first in the text, along with the property of the prince (Ez. 45:1-8) and both allotments are restated in the final section (Ez. 48:8-22), concentrically framed by the allotments of land to the twelve tribes. Furthermore, the central position of the text is occupied by a stream of water issuing forth from the nuclear sanctuary. Thus, far from being pushed to the background, the centrality of the temple is emphasised throughout the text and is further reflected by the text's compositional structure.

4.521 The equality of the tribes is nevertheless an interesting theme that deserves closer attention. It is striking that Ezekiel lists all twelve tribes as essential components of the house of Israel, although ten of these had historically ceased to exist after their destruction by Assyrian forces in the eighth century B.C.E. The actual remnant of returning exiles was composed of members of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Both these tribes are given special positions in the apportioning of land, in that they are placed tangentially to the central segment of the sacred district. Yet, notwithstanding their special status, they are listed alongside with a number of historically non-existing tribes. This anachronism demonstrates once again the prophet's inclusive understanding of post-exilic Israel. The inclusion of all original

twelve components of the first Israel signifies that the *golah* is not only heir to the former estates of Judah and Benjamin, but indeed represents the entirety of Israel before the division of the two kingdoms (*cf. supra*)

4.53 At the centre of the allotments of tribal land is the sacred segment containing the city, the land of the Levites as well as the property of the prince (Ez. 45:1-8. 48:8-22). The segment thus encompasses the religious and civil authorities of the new land, i.e. the state apparatus sustained by the agricultural surplus of the land. In other words, both the civil authority, represented by the prince, who ensures the maintenance of justice in the land, as well as the temple system, which maintains the state cult, are placed at the centre of the land to profit from its peasant based agricultural economy.

4.531 Interestingly, the prince's land is divided into two portions which are located to the east and the west of the temple district.

And to the prince shall  
belong what is on either  
side of the sacred district  
and of the property of the  
city. (Ez. 45:7a $\alpha$ )

ולנשיא מזה ומזה  
לתרומת הקדש ולאחזת  
העיר

This division stands in direct opposition to the highly centralised power of the temple system. While the temple's power is singular and unified, occupying centre stage in the new land, the prince's power is diffused, broken, and pushed off centre. Again, his authority appears to be a mere formality, well in accord with his privilege to eat his bread in the vestibule of the eastern gate (Ez. 44:3), while being barred from the temple service as such. The real power in Ezekiel's post-exilic Israel is clearly

situated with the temple system administered by the Zadokite priests, i.e. Ezekiel's own social class.

4.54 The importance of the temple system for the general well being of the new state is signified by the life giving stream of water that proceeds from the sanctuary and flows toward the east.

And he returned me to the gate of the house, and see, water was issuing forth from below the threshold of the house toward the east, for the temple was facing east, and the water was flowing down from below the slope of the house on the right side, south of the altar. (Ez. 47:1)

וַיֵּשְׁבֵנִי אֶל-פֶּתַח הַבַּיִת  
וְהִנֵּה-מַיִם יֹצְאִים מִתַּחַת  
מִפֶּתַח הַבַּיִת קָדִימָה  
כִּי-פָנִי הַבַּיִת קָדִים  
וְהַמַּיִם יֵרְדִים מִתַּחַת  
מִכַּתֵּף הַבַּיִת הַיְמָנִית  
מִנְּגִבָּה לַמִּזְבֵּחַ:

The river is further described as a source of fertility and blessings, swarming with fish (47:9-10) and providing rich vegetation along its shores (47:12). This motif of the paradisaal stream is by no means unique to the book of Ezekiel. The Yahwist's creation myth, for example, describes a river that flowed from the central garden of Eden, dividing into four smaller streams encircling adjacent lands.

And a river issued forth from Eden to water the garden, and it divided from here and there were four headwaters. (Gen 2:10)

וַיֵּצֵא מִעֵדֶן  
לְהַשְׁקוֹת אֶת-הַגֶּן וּמִשָּׁם  
יִפְרָד וְהָיָה לָאֲרֻבָּעָה  
רָאשִׁים:

4.541 This parallel of Ezekiel's sacred stream to the Yahwist's river of paradise has moved Eichrodt to see it as a symbol for a universal, new world order. "The

return of paradise," he writes, "apparently at present limited to Palestine, is of its very nature a universal event, embracing the whole world" (Eichrodt 1970:583).

Eichrodt's reading is, however, contrary to the highly exclusive theology displayed by the prophet until now. The entire first part of the book is concerned with the exclusion of the Jerusalemite remnant from the house of Israel. Ez. 44:9 states unmistakably that foreigners are not to enter the sanctuary of Israel's national deity, Ezekiel's vision of the new temple is characterised by separating walls and guarded gateways. Why, we should ask, would Ezekiel now posit the existence of a life giving stream that cuts across all national boundaries and separations previously established? I would agree with Katheryn Pfisterer Darr (1987) who has argued that Ezekiel's river is not so much a foretaste of the return to paradise, but a manifestations of blessings poured out upon Israel which does not extend beyond its own borders.<sup>22</sup>

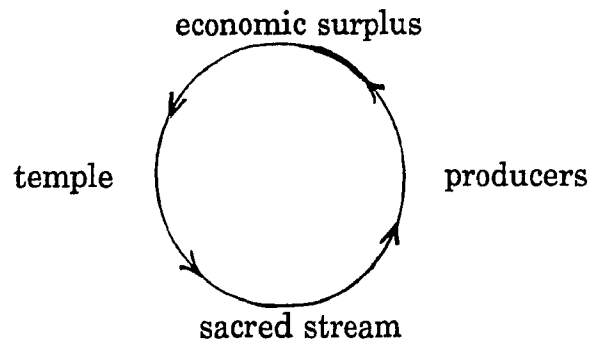
4.542 Somewhat similar to Eichrodt, Zimmerli (1983a:516) has linked the motif of the sacred stream to Ps. 46 and remarked that "[t]he inhabited world lives on the surplus of the riches of paradise." His remark is interesting insofar as it employs the terminology of the economic distribution of wealth. I had noted earlier that the surplus in the economic system of Ezekiel's new Israel proceeds from the agricultural producers and benefits the central temple and administrative system. Thus, it is not so much the inhabited world that benefits from the surplus of production, but the

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<sup>22</sup> May (1955) has argued that the Hebrew phrase מַיִם רַבִּים ("many waters") conveys some cosmic connotations and often implies "many peoples" or "many lands." However, although the phrase appears a number of time in Ezekiel's foreign nation oracles, it is absent in the prophet's description of the miraculous stream (Ez. 47:1-12).

temple system and the Zadokite administrators. In exchange, the temple guarantees the fertility of the rivers and fields required for agricultural production. What results is a myth of the temple as guarantor of well being, a myth not only affirmed by Ez. 47:1-13, but also by Ps. 46, as well as some contemporary biblical scholars.

fig. 6



The distribution of power in the new Israel is thus justified by the apparently natural cycle of fertilisation and surplus taxation. The system is closed in itself, encompassing the entirety of Ezekiel's "paradise contained" (Pfisterer Darr 1987:279).

4.6 We can now identify two distinct concerns that dominate Ezekiel's vision of the new land--the separation of the realm of the divine from the realm of the human and the hierarchy of power underlying the social infrastructure of the future state. Somewhat similarly, Greenberg (1984:192) had argued that the single overriding purpose of Ez. 40-48 is expressed in the double theme of separation and gradation. Greenberg, however, ignored the political implications of the text, focusing exclusively on the aspect of holiness. In this regard, his argument is reminiscent of

Bertholet's observation (1936:151) that the separation of sacred and profane is only relative, as indicated by Ez. 45:1f and 48:12ff. The two textual sources listed by Bertholet are not supportive of his argument, since they merely state that lands adjacent to the holy segment are also referred to as holy but do not relativise the actual holiness of the temple district. The wall around the temple indicates quite clearly that there is a very definite boundary separating the holy and the common. Furthermore, the root  $\text{V}\text{I}\text{P}$ , which signifies what is "set apart", defies by definition the laws of relativity. The temple district is the realm of the sacred, although there may be areas which tolerate a certain presence of the profane, just as the outside the separating wall is the realm of the profane, even though elements of the sacred may be found in areas adjacent to the holy district. Thus, what may appear as a gradation of relativisation of holiness is in fact merely a difference of points of contact between the two realms.

4.61 Nevertheless, the element of gradation plays an important role in Ezekiel's vision. The cultic hierarchy consisting of worshippers, Levites, and Zadokites, as well as the distribution of the land to the twelve tribes, the prince, and the temple district reflect a very specific understanding of gradation and relativisation of power. In other words, while concerns with the sacred are characterised by the theme of separation, the internal lines of the social system are marked by gradation. Both were presented as defective in Ezekiel's earlier condemnations of the city of Jerusalem; now the boundaries of the system and the separation of sacred and profane, as well as the distribution of power within the

system and the maintenance of this hierarchy, are presented as the two underlying themes in the ideal blueprint of the future state.

## 5.0 Conclusions

5.1 In my analysis of Ezekiel's ideology of purity and power I have focused on three basic themes: a) the defilement of the city of Jerusalem; b) the purifying destruction of the city; and c) the ideological blueprint for the new and pure land and its capital city. These three themes are not isolated notions, but are, as is the case in any structure of ideas, interdependent components of a larger ideological concept--the hegemony of the *golah* in Israel. While the accusation of defilement condemns the Jerusalemite remnant on the explicit level of judgement, on the implicit level of rhetoric this accusation affirms the identity of the exiles as the true remnant of Israel by invalidating the identity of the Jerusalemites. This bilateral function is well reflected in the many textual parallels between Ez. 8--Ezekiel's vision of the defiled city--and Ez. 40-48--Ezekiel's vision of the pure land awaiting the return of its rightful owners. On a more general level, the obscenities described in the prophet's oracles of defilement are paralleled in his ideological blueprint for the new state. Thus, the breakdown of boundary structures is counterpoised by the careful description of walls and gateways; the element of plurality is answered by the centrality and singularity of Yahwistic worship; and finally the perversion of relationships within the system is paralleled by the clear separation of the divine realm from the human as well as by the detailed description of a social hierarchy operative in the new state.

5.11 But, as defilement and restoration are bilateral elements in Ezekiel's ideology, the city's impurity and its final destruction are also interdependent themes.



I have shown that the apocalypse of Jerusalem, which is signified by a number of images and metaphors, is but the logical conclusion to the city's defilement. This is most obvious in the two prostitution metaphors (Ez. 16, 23), in which Jerusalem's former "lovers" are the agents of her downfall. The "attractive young men" with whom the prostitute had defiled herself now come to her execution. Thus it is not primarily YHWH who punishes the city and its inhabitants through divine intervention, but it is the system itself, devouring its offenders.

5.12 Finally, the destruction of the city of Jerusalem was the essential prerequisite for Ezekiel's "new order." Those who were not deported in 597 by Nebuchadrezzar have brought about the complete disintegration of their religious, political and social structure and have thus defied the very parameters by which the house of Israel, according to Ezekiel, defines itself. Consequently, they have lost their identity and in fact their very existence within the ideological boundaries of Israel. The prophet does not need to incorporate the Jerusalemite remnant into his vision of post-exilic Israel, for there is no Israel apart from the *golah*. This is mirrored in Ezekiel's vision of the new land which is completely devoid of human life. The land is resting as during a jubilee year, after which all property shall be returned to its rightful owners, Ezekiel's own exilic community.

5.2 It is quite unimportant whether Ezekiel's accusations of defilement are based on historical realities or not. It is unlikely that the people of Jerusalem after the first deportation managed to commit as many obscenities as the prophet claims they have. It is significant, however, that Ezekiel claims that the Jerusalemites have

defiled themselves. Drawing upon pre-existing notions of religious and political/social purity, the prophet was able to synthesize an ideology that was endorsed by his exilic support group and which was used to exclude the Jerusalemite remnant from the house of Israel. This ideology had to be based on the idea of national or religious purity, since impurity necessarily implied the defiance of a particular order normative in a given society. Thus, defining the categories and parameters of the natural and social order underlying Israel's world-view, Ezekiel was also able to identify those who have transgressed against it, thereby excluding them from the system itself.

5.3 The success of Ezekiel's rhetoric against the Jerusalemite remnant can be seen from the fact that the event of the exile became a national experience for the house of Israel, comparable to the exodus from Egypt, while there exists no tradition of the Jerusalemite community during the time of the exile. As far as canonised history is concerned, all of Israel was in exile; there was no house of Israel apart from the *golah*. Yet, the idea of purity remained the ideological basis for later Judaism and, in a somewhat different manner although equally significant, Christianity. In this context, Ezekiel's rhetoric and ideology represent merely the beginning of a long history of religious and political thought centered around concepts of purity and defilement. The origin of this movement, the conflict between the Jerusalemite and the exilic remnant of Israel, may have been forgotten, but its tenets survived and came to dominate a significant part of Western thought.

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